

Among the Righteous
Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands

Robert Satloff

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Chapter 4

“Nobody Told Them to Do That”

At every stage of the Nazi, Vichy, and Fascist persecution of Jews in Arab lands, and in every place that it occurred, Arabs played a supporting role. At times, Arabs were essential to the process. At other times, the Arab role was passive yet still critical. And there were those occasions when certain Arabs did more than just collaborate—they made an already trying situation intolerable.

If there is one word to characterize the attitude of most Arabs toward Jews during the war years, it is “indifference.” That word appears time and again in Jewish accounts of the period. A veteran of the Bizerte labor camp, for example, described in his memoirs how Arabs reacted when they saw Jewish workers filing through the streets, pail and shovel over their shoulders: “The Arabs regarded them indifferently,” he wrote.¹ An historian of the period, writing in the early postwar years, observed that the “attitude of the great majority of the non-Jewish population of Tunis conformed to that of the [French] authorities: there were gestures of sympathy, but in large there was glacial indifference.”²

Indifference has many shades. At one end of the spectrum, indifference could refer to a certain steely stoicism, a my-hands-are-tied inaction. As harrowing as life was for Jews in Arab lands during the war, the mass of Arabs suffered considerable hardships, too. Goods were scarce, food was rationed, and hunger and disease took a heavy toll. Politically, Arabs were not on sure ground, either. To many Germans and their European partners, Arabs were only marginally less inferior than Jews. As one German officer said ominously to an Arab enjoying the comeuppance of Jews near Tunis, “Your time will come. We will finish with the Jews and then we will take care of you.”³ If indifference meant that Arabs were primarily concerned with securing the means for their own survival—finding food, shelter, work, and so on—and could not spare the effort to act on their natural human sympathy toward their Jewish compatriots, then theirs was an understandable, even legitimate “indifference,” born of necessity.

At the other end of the spectrum, indifference could also reflect a callous disregard for Jews that had lived—simultaneously protected, tolerated, and subordinate—within Arab societies for hundreds of years. If that is what contemporary observers meant when they used the term, then the indifferent were, in a sense, tacitly complicit in the crimes of the foreigners. It is clear that, whatever their attitude toward the fate of the Jews, many Arabs were not indifferent to the coming of the Jews' tormentors. "Go, go, I would wish to be with you, Hitler," were the lyrics of one popular Berber song of this period.⁴ The head of the Vichy regime, Marshal Pétain, had a position of particular respect in the eyes of many Arabs, because of his age, his military exploits, his emphasis on family, his carefully crafted persona of personal modesty. As Algerian professor Ahmed Ibnou Zekri, a member of Vichy's National Council, said, "For us Muslims, Marshal Pétain is 'a sid' [an honored lord]."⁵

Clarity on this issue is important: By virtually all accounts, the mass of Arabs neither participated in nor actively supported the anti-Jewish campaign that European Fascists brought to North Africa. The preoccupation of most Arabs was survival; for those of the political class, the emerging challenge to colonial rule was a much greater concern than contributing to the persecution of Jews.⁶ But if one can excuse those Arabs who took satisfaction at the collapse of the French republic before the forces of Nazi Germany, the general sense of welcome accorded to European persecutors of Jews bespoke an indifference to the fate of the Jews that was hardly benign. In the view of many Arabs, if the humbling of French colonialists brought with it the humbling of the Jews, too, then so be it.

A rung up the ladder of Arab complicity were those Arabs who not only watched as Europeans imported and then imposed major elements of their system of racial persecution on Jews but who also cheered what they saw. Though not lead actors in the anti-Jewish drama, they were, in a certain way, its Greek chorus.

Here are some excerpts from oral testimonies that tell this part of the story. Gad Shahar, a veteran of Tunisia's Safsaf and Sedjanane work camps, recalled that local Arabs hailed

German soldiers as they paraded Jews through the country's capital. "Muslims applauded the Nazi forces that arrested the Jews and made them march through Tunis," he told an interviewer. "Muslims smashed bottles at us, at the Mateur station, jugs from which [we planned] to quench the thirst of old and tired Jews."⁷

Yehoshua Duweib, another survivor of a Tunisian labor camp, testified that the "Arabs were gloating" when the Germans marched him and fellow Jews through town on the way to a work site. "They would say to us: 'Push the shovel, ya Shalom' [a common Jewish name]. They meant: 'Until now you were a merchant or a clerk, but now you'll work hard.'" Even Arab women, breaking local custom that kept them in their homes virtually all the time, came out to watch and laugh at the humbled Jewish workers, he said.⁸ Victor Cohen, also from Tunis, reported that when the Germans herded Jewish laborers through the streets, the "true nature" of the city's Arabs was finally revealed. "They were happy," he said. "They would mock and laugh: 'Take the shovel, pick up the shovel.'"⁹

Yehuda Chachmon, who lived under Italian rule in Benghazi, Libya, said Arab street gangs grew so brazen and powerful during the war years that Jews were too afraid to leave their homes after dark. "Arabs would throw oranges, tomatoes, stones at us," he said. "Every Jew would hide in his house after five in the evening. The houses were closed [i.e., locked up] with bars and you could not leave until the morning."¹⁰

Ernest-Yehoshua Ozan, a sales representative for his family's business, was ordered by the Germans to do his forced labor on a farm in Tunisia. He recalled the special pleasure some Arabs derived from the misfortune of Jews. "Near the farm where we worked were several Arab families [who would] always try to tell us things like: 'Your Tunis has been completely destroyed by bombings ... No one was left alive in the city of Tunis.' They knew we were from Tunis. They always 'made sure' to tell us things like that," he said.¹¹

These cheerleaders for the persecution were normally from the lower economic classes. They took a certain measure of satisfaction from the comeuppance of Jews, who, despite

the large number of Jewish poor, were widely considered to be a wealthy community. Higher up the Arab social ladder were those who either applauded the imposition of anti-Jewish laws or complained that the new laws did not go far enough. Some Arab notables argued that anti-Jewish statutes contained too many loopholes and did not adequately benefit the local Arab community. In December 1940, an Arab newspaper in Algiers proposed that Vichy authorities take a page from the Germans and require Jews to wear special distinguishing clothes: “It is necessary to prohibit Jews from wearing the hats of Europeans and indigenous peoples ... We propose that the Government impose on Algerian Jews their particular headgear—the ancestral skullcap....” One month earlier, the same newspaper suggested that Jews were so cunning that protecting the Arab majority from their schemes might require more extreme measures. “The only effective remedy may be to isolate them on a faraway island or in a distant desert under rigorous international control,” ran an editorial in *el-Balagh*—a proposal that was *not* intended as an endorsement of Zionist aspirations.¹²

If some Arabs enjoyed seeing Jews made low, there were also those who took advantage of Jewish suffering for their own commercial gain. Although they did not inflict pain or anguish on Jews, they did reap direct financial benefit from the Jews’ plight. They engaged in behavior typical of this kind of situation, such as profiteering. With the coming of war, there were severe shortages of many basic goods and foodstuffs in Morocco and Algeria, and the extra francs Arabs earned from Jews in trying circumstances no doubt softened the blow. Tunisians, for example, celebrated a plentiful Ramadan in early autumn 1942, and the country maintained a semblance of normalcy until the onset of the German occupation. By year’s end, however, they faced bare store-shelves, a raging black market, and the early signs of hunger, so the fact that some Arabs took advantage of Jews by hiking up prices on food, rent, and other necessities seemed to be a reasonable solution for trying times. In the grand scheme of the war, this was petty profiteering. To the Jews in question, however, the exorbitant prices demanded for basic necessities and the larceny, corruption, and double-dealing that characterized the black market economy often determined who survived and who did not.

Testimonies provide numerous accounts of Jews victimized by Arab wartime profiteering. Miriam Levy, of Benghazi, explained that the havoc caused by aerial bombardments was often compounded by the looting of Jewish property that would follow immediately thereafter. “The Arabs, they would take advantage of us. Always wanting money, a bomb falls in the house of the Jews, all the property is lost. Stealing and robbing, doing what they want...”¹³ According to Isaac Jacques Smadja of La Marsa, an upscale seaside suburb of Tunis, looting sometimes assumed gruesome proportions: “At the end of the bombings ... we saw the Arabs in their cruelty. We saw how they cut the fingers [of corpses] to steal rings and gold jewelry from the Jews. We saw how they cut throats in order to get necklaces. We saw how they cut belts to get the buckles...”¹⁴ Victor Cohen, of Tunis, told the story of his brother, who was sent to a remote rural site for his forced labor. For the first four days, he said, the Germans gave the workers no food at all. Local Arabs filled the breach by selling the workers orange peels. Then, he said, the Arabs promptly stole them back. “[The workers] were dying of hunger,” he explained.¹⁵

Jews accused Arabs of price gouging, especially when Jews had to flee their bombed-out homes in Tunisian cities and towns and sought refuge in Arab villages in the countryside. Corinne Boukobza-Hakmoun related a family tale of her uncle, Albert Nataf, a wealthy landowner from Sousse, who handed “a massive bundle of bank notes” to an Arab in the village of Djemmal to secure refuge for his family from Allied bombing raids of their hometown.¹⁶ Yaacov Zrivy, from a village near Sfax, Tunisia’s second-largest city, recalled the huge sums Arabs charged Jews to rent houses or apartments after the Germans forced many Jews out of their homes.¹⁷

In Morocco, some Arab notables saw in the imposition of Vichy anti-Jewish laws an opportunity to improve both their personal finances and their political fortunes. Grand Vizier Mohamed El Mokri explained the urgency to Vichy foreign minister Paul Baudouin: Before the French established their protectorate, the Jews would take twenty years to amass a fortune, keep it for ten years until the government stole it away, and then start the cycle all over again. But twenty-eight years of French protection risked breaking

this rhythm, El Mokri said, with the result that likeminded Moroccans had only two years left to work closely with Vichy to pillage the Jews if they were to keep the thirty-year cycle intact.¹⁸ Numerous Moroccan officials were evidently willing to help make that deadline. The pasha of Marrakesh, for example, turned against the local Jewish community as a way to defend himself against the embarrassing and potentially dangerous accusation of being too pro-French. Not only did he commend the idea that local Jews should wear distinctive garb to distinguish them from Arabs, but he also went on to strike what one historian called “a major blow” against the Jews of Morocco’s southern metropolis when he imposed a 100,000 franc levy on the inhabitants of the local Jewish quarter (*mellah*). Similarly, the pasha of Salé, Rabat’s sister-city, issued an edict banning Jews from hiring Muslims.¹⁹ And in the town of Beni-Mellal, the local Muslim governor and the French civil controller jointly decreed that any European who wanted to settle in the town had the right to choose a home occupied by Jews.²⁰ Indeed, Vichy officials were often eager to cultivate Arab profiteering as a way to divert the attention of a potentially restive local population. “Thanks to a prosperity to which they are not accustomed, the indigenous population is calm,” wrote the provisional commander of the Tunis gendarmerie in his monthly report for August 1941. “In its large majority, they are loyal to us.” To the extent such loyalty did exist—the commander almost surely exaggerated for the benefit of his superiors—it was due to the financial windfalls of the anti-Jewish campaign, not the success of pro-Axis propaganda, he noted.²¹

As unseemly and ignoble as these acts were, if they reflected the totality of the Arab contribution to the anti-Jewish campaign in Arab lands, then these Arab indiscretions would deserve little more than passing reference in any dispassionate history of the war years in North Africa. If all the Arabs did to support the European persecution of Jews was take some pleasure and satisfaction at the comeuppance of a minority that had, in the eyes of many, disproportionate wealth and privilege—and perhaps earn some muchneeded extra wartime cash along the way—then it would be unfair to charge them with responsibility in the foreigners’ crimes.

But many Arabs did more than just cheer on the sidelines as Jews were marched off to forced labor. They provided the manpower—guards, foremen, train conductors, and so forth—that made the persecution possible. And, if numerous eyewitness accounts are to be believed, a sizable number often performed their tasks willfully, even eagerly. Sometimes their zealotry was characterized by gratuitous violence that bordered on the sadistic. It was against the background of the raucous cheering of thousands that these essential Arab cogs in the Nazi, Vichy, and Fascist war machinery did their jobs. The active cheerleaders and the passive onlookers created an enabling environment for the willing participants; if the first two groups had not played their part, it is uncertain whether the latter would have played theirs. For that reason, if for none other, they earn their place in the opening pages of a chapter on the Arab role in the persecution of Jews in Arab lands.

The willing participants were everywhere, performing every duty necessary to make the wheels of persecution turn. Numerous testimonies affirm that Arab soldiers, policemen, and workers all played roles—sometimes large, sometimes small—in implementing the designs of the European persecutors of North African Jewry: from the execution of anti-Jewish statutes, to the recruitment of Jewish workers, to the operation of forced labor camps. From the outskirts of Casablanca to the deserts south of Tripoli, Arabs routinely served as guards, watchmen, and overseers at those labor camps. With rare exceptions, they were feared by Jewish (and other) captives as willing and loyal servants of their Nazi, Vichy, and Fascist superiors.

Yehoshua Duweib was interned at Bizerte's notorious Philibert barracks, perhaps the harshest of Tunisia's work sites. He remembered a particularly zealous local patrolman who led a group of other Arabs in tracking down and rounding up Jews trying to escape from the hazards of nighttime bombardment. "He would gather more Arabs who threatened us and brought us back to the German army," said Duweib.²² Tzvi Haddad, of Gabès, in Tunisia, recalled that Arab overseers—not Germans or Italians—were entrusted with marching his gang of fifty laborers to their work site in the morning and then back to town each evening.²³

For some—perhaps even most—of these Arabs, guarding Jews and otherwise servicing the Germans, Italians, and French was a necessary if regrettable side of war. There was no joy in the job, just pay. For many, however, the Nazi, Fascist, and Vichy persecution of Jews offered an opportunity to participate in the Europeans' anti-Jewish campaign. Whether they were underlings or overseers, these Arabs became full partners in the wartime maltreatment of Jews in Arab lands.

Wherever torture occurred, Arabs played a role. Arab guards, for example, routinely flogged prisoners at “punishment camps” in the Sahara.²⁴ An Algerian account of brutality at Colomb-Béchar, one of the largest Vichy labor camps, tells the story of one internee who jumped through a barracks window and escaped into the desert, only to be tracked down “by Arab soldiers on horseback who dragged him back to camp tied to their horses.” The captured man was then sent to a particularly hellish spot called Hadjerat M'Guil, where he was tortured and died eight days later.²⁵ At Djenien Bou-Rezg, another infamous Vichy concentration camp, the sadistic commandant, Lieutenant Pierre de Ricko, had at his side a team of subordinates that included a pro-fascist Alsatian, a German who moonlighted as head of a local gang of anti-Semitic hooligans, and an Arab policeman named Ali Guesni.²⁶ At Djelfa, in the Algerian desert, the commanding officer was another sadist, J. Caboche, who liked to strip all the clothes off prisoners and then horsewhip them. Caboche forbade his prisoners to light any fires to keep warm. On especially cold desert nights, Caboche's loyal Arab adjutant—a man known to posterity only as Ahmed²⁷—reportedly took particular pleasure in making sure his charges froze.²⁸ An Arab served as camp overseer of the Dumergue-Fretiha farm labor camp near the northern Tunisian town of Mateur. Accounts attest to the daily regimen of gratuitous pain and torture that he meted out to the forty Jews unlucky enough to be dispatched to work under his supervision.²⁹

A British officer who served on the Allied commission to investigate, and eventually liberate, Vichy labor camps, described the role of *goumiers*—local Arab soldiers—at a

small punishment camp not far from the mining and railroad town of Bou Arfa, in southeastern Morocco.³⁰

The camp of ‘Ain al-Ourak is under the command of six former underofficers of the Foreign LegionIt is guarded and supervised by a detachment of “goumiers” (troupe of native Arabs from the southern territories) numbering about sixty. These “goumiers” ... stop attempts of escape by the men being “disciplined.” They guard the camp with a bayonet on their rifles, their guns loaded, and are instructed to make use of their guns should an attempt at escape be made Some of the work done by the inmates is supervised by the “goumiers”....

Arab guards, the officer explained, were also the camp torturers. They were the ones, he said, who supervised the *tombeau*, the punishment I described in the last chapter, and made sure the prisoners, lying in their own waste, remained still as zombies, never moving to swat a fly or evade a scorpion. “Those who dare to raise their heads expose themselves to a rain of stones thrown by the Arabs who are on guard or to be kicked, or blows from rifles,” he reported.

The 1943 British Foreign Office document “Barbaric Treatment of Jews and Aliens in Morocco,” which tells the story of five Polish Jews who made their way to London after being liberated from Vichy labor camps, includes harrowing details of the *tombeau* and the role that Arab guards played in implementing the torture.³¹

Typical of the offences which earned a man a stretch of *tombeau* was that of the German Jew Selgo. In January 1942, Selgo injured his leg and wrapped a bandage around the wound. The bandage kept slipping down and he stopped his road-making from time to time to pull it up. For this [Foreign Legionnaire] Gayer ordered fifteen days *tombeau*. Like all the others, he had to lie face up night and day. He had no covering, only a tattered Legion uniform with no underclothes. He was not allowed to move or change positions in the *tombeau*.

An Arab was posted over the graves to see that the victims stayed rigidly still. There were 24 *tombeau* in a row. If a man moved when the Arab was near, he got a blow with a rifle butt. If the Arab was further away and the man out of [his] reach, the guard would hurl a stone at him. The only occasion when a man was allowed to raise his head a little was after a rainstorm when the graves filled with water. Then he was allowed a stone for a head-rest to save him from drowning. As the subsoil was clay, the water would take three days to drain away. [One of the informants] once had to lie in water for three days and nights, but he was lucky. It was during the summer and though the nights were bitterly cold, the water did not freeze. Selgo was not so fortunate. He was sentenced in January and after a rainstorm the water in his grave froze by night. After his fifteen days he was removed from the *tombeau* with both legs frost-bitten. They took him to hospital and amputated both his feet.... No talking among the victims was allowed, although each *tombeau* was only 40 centimeters from the next. Six Arabs mounted guard at a time and were relieved every two hours. Gayer or one of the other guards would bring the men their meals—1 liter of water at 0800 hours, 250 grams of bread and a glass of water at 1200 hours, and another glass of water at nightfall. A man was allowed to relieve himself only during these three visits of the guard. If he could not do it then he had to do it in his clothes and lie in it. The Arab guards had no authority to allow him to leave the grave. As the majority of prisoners were suffering from severe and sanguinary dysentery, a man lying in his own filth was the rule rather than the exception.

In Chapter 3, I told the story of Harry Alexander, a Jew from Leipzig who survived two years in the desert hellhole of Djelfa, one of Vichy's harshest concentration camps in North Africa. From the moment he arrived at the Djelfa train station, Arab guards figured large in his harrowing ordeal:

Spahis are elite Arab troops. They're on horses. They're very cruel people. We were horse-whipped all the way [from the railroad station], walking two or three

miles to the camp, through the sand, through the hot sun. We were beaten all the way down there. And people that fell down we had to drag them along because of the chains.

Later in his oral history, videotaped for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Harry Alexander described the torture he suffered at the hands of the Arab guards:

For the slightest infraction of the rules, they would bury you in the sand up to your neck. And the Arabs would urinate on your head. And if you moved your head, they would take a big stone and smash your head. You weren't supposed to move. If a scorpion or a viper or ants or whatever there was would bite you, you could not move.

With no means to defend themselves, Harry and his fellow inmates resisted by not giving their torturers the satisfaction of hearing them cry out in pain.

The only way we could fight back, the only way we could protest this cruel treatment, was by not giving in to their punishment. They could beat us all they want ... and we would sit quietly and silently absorb it, without a peep. We would not even make a sound, a noise. It would hurt. It would bleed. You would be in excruciating pain. And the more we defied them in our own way, the more they would beat us ... and figure out more punishments, bigger punishments, longer punishments, more beatings, no water for the day, no food for two days, standing naked being tied to a post in the sun all day, in the hot African sun, putting a bucket of ants over your head, burying you in the sand to your neck and urinating on your head, and beating your head open—and nothing they did could make us make a sound.

Asked whether the actions of his Arab guards could be explained by the excuse that they were “just following orders,” Harry gave this reply:

No, no, no! The cruelty and the barbaric manners of the guards, that came out by themselves. Nobody told them to beat us all the time. Nobody told them to chain us together. Nobody told them to beat us up with chains and whips.... Nobody told them to tie us naked to a post and beat us and to hang us by our arms and hose us down, to bury us in the sand so our heads should look up and bash our brains in and urinate on our heads. Nobody told them to do that. They told us we're supposed to be confined to work on the Transsaharien [railroad]. But nobody told them how much or how hard or how.... No, they took this into their own hands and they enjoyed what they did. You could see it on their faces; they enjoyed it.³²

In some cases, Arab soldiers exploited their power and their weapons to terrorize Jews. After Operation Torch, Maurice Marrachi, a Moroccan Jew, detailed a litany of Arab “abuses of power” in letters to British and American diplomats. He wrote that Arab troops were unlawfully breaking into homes, extorting money, and “even passing the night in the company of the mistress of the house.”³³ Arab troops were incensed at the pleasure Jews took in the speedy Anglo-American trouncing of Vichy troops in Operation Torch and retaliated by locking the gates on the Jewish quarter of Rabat for three weeks, keeping the thousands of Jews who lived in the cramped, squalid conditions of the *mellah* penned up inside. Firsthand accounts attest to the fact that—adding insult to injury—the *goumiers* also extorted food and lodging from the Jews of Rabat throughout this ordeal. Similar troubles were recorded in other cities around the sultanate, such as Meknès and Fez, often with what one historian called the “active participation” of government agents, policemen, European soldiers, and “native elements.”³⁴

In Tunisia, local Arab mobs—their numbers augmented by the return of Arab conscripts demobilized from the French army after its surrender to Germany—frequently turned their sights on Jews.³⁵ In August 1940, the towns of Kef, Ebba Ksour, Moktar, and Siliana were the scene of riots and pillaging against Jews. Triggered by rumors that Jews had kidnapped a young Muslim girl, the violence actually reflected a more general rise in anti-Semitic sentiment, with the Jews increasingly blamed for wartime shortages.³⁶ The

French, of course, had themselves to blame for stoking anti-Jewish feeling, but now they had an even greater fear that “malcontent on the part of the Muslim masses,” as Admiral Estéva, the French resident-general put it, could escalate into mass anti-French unrest.³⁷ Reflecting the tragic absurdity of the times, French officials blamed the Jews for their own misfortune. At one point, Vichy foreign minister Paul Baudouin urged Estéva to warn Jewish leaders in “severe and frank” language to stop agitating against Pétainism and to accept their persecution quietly. He also ordered Estéva to find quiet ways to indulge Arab sensibilities, such as freeing from prison those Arabs who had been convicted of pillage and theft for their role in anti-Jewish riots.³⁸ Even so, violence continued. In November 1940, there was an anti-Jewish riot in Degache. In early 1941, the same fate befell the Jewish community in Gafsa.

Then, in May 1941, the coastal city of Gabès was the scene of North Africa’s worst wartime outburst of all, a three-day paroxysm of violence, pillage, and murder. What started with an attack by a gang of thirty Arabs on a synagogue, perhaps prompted by news of the demise of the short-lived pro-Nazi regime in Iraq, deteriorated into a mass frenzy of violence that left eight Jews killed and twenty injured.³⁹ Again, local Arab policemen were, at best, ineffective, and at worst, complicit.⁴⁰

The rampage in Gabès was blood-curdling. Yosef Huri, a survivor, recalled what happened to his neighbor, Afilia Rakach. Rakach was in her small kitchen, cooking dinner for her family, when a gang of local Arabs barged into her home. According to Huri, they grabbed a pot of boiling soup, poured it over her, tortured her in her house, stoned her, and then killed her.⁴¹ Another survivor, Youssef Mimoun, recalled that in one quarter of Gabès, Arab and Jewish neighbors had joined together for an evening of celebration—eating and drinking—the night before the rioting. The same people who had broken bread with the Jews one night, attacked them the next. “Although we had good relations, there were those among them who hated Jews just because we were Jews,” he said.⁴²

Tzvi Haddad, who lived at the end of a largely Arab street near a coffee house, remained haunted by the image of his mother, who left their home at the first sign of trouble to look

for his sister. As soon as his mother got out the door, he recalled, an Arab knocked her down and then another grabbed her and tried to cut her throat. Tzvi heard his mother's screams, ran out to the street, saw blood flowing on her face and legs. Eventually, Tzvi's father arrived to rescue his wife, who, miraculously, survived. She carried a scar on her throat for the rest of her life.⁴³

After the total breakdown of order in Gabès, Vichy police for the first time reacted with force and resolution. This was not born of any sympathy for Jewish victims, however. The French had more a self-interested concern: that rioting could deteriorate into anarchy and lead to further loss of French control and prestige. Indeed, colonial officials frequently noted that France's surrender to the Germans eroded the mystique of power and invulnerability the French held over the Arabs, who saw weakness and took advantage of it. As Estéva cabled his superiors at Vichy:

It is necessary to understand that German prestige has been on the rise for some time. It leads Muslims to believe themselves to be more and more on top of the Jews, since the latter keep their confidence in Britain and America.... And in Gabès, the presence of German officers has without doubt, even without intervention on their part, let the Arabs believe they would be protected in case of riots. [I have already explained the] vexing notion among the Tunisians and even among the entourage of the Bey that Hitler is the master of the entire world and that France, in the Regency, exercises its mandate only thanks to the generosity of the Führer.⁴⁴

To restore the perception of French dominance and control, Estéva ordered the arrest of several of the Arab perpetrators, five of whom were later executed in the Tunis kasbah. But the Gabès affair left both Jews and Arabs bruised and wary. Jews who had, for decades, put their trust in France as the protecting power felt the French were too slow to act and too solicitous of Arab sensibilities. For their part, Arabs who watched, often approvingly, as Vichy imposed stiff anti-Jewish statutes were stung that local French

officials would punish them merely for stripping those measures of all legal niceties and taking them one logical step further.⁴⁵

Arab guards working under German, French, and Italian officers at labor camps were not the only uniformed Arabs to side with the Axis powers. A small army of other Arabs volunteered for service, either directly in special German units or in paramilitary formations that fought with, or supported, Axis forces.

The *Phalange Africaine*—also known as the *Légion des Volontaires Française de Tunisie*—was first organized by Vichy officers in the aftermath of Operation Torch. The unit had 400 soldiers, about one-third Arab and the balance a motley collection of various European pro-Fascist misfits. In February 1943, the German army took full control of the *Phalange*. Over the next year, the unit fought against both British troops and Free French forces. Its commander, Pierre Cristofini, was convicted of treason by a French military tribunal in 1944 and executed.

A second formation—this time, all-Arab—was the *Brigade Nord Africaine*, a group of Algerian volunteers established under German supervision by a former French officer named Mohamed el-Maadi, a virulent anti-Semite who went by the nickname “SS Mohamed.” The unit was deployed to fight the partisans of the Dordogne region of France.⁴⁶

In addition to these paramilitary groups, the Germans tried to organize special units composed of Arab troops operating directly under their command. In January 1942, they established the German-Arab Training Battalion, which brought together Arabs who had been taken as prisoners of war after serving in the British or French armies. Volunteers hailed from Egypt, the Levant, and even as far away as Saudi Arabia, showing that it mattered little whether the hated colonialist was British or French: The Germans played on Arab dislike of both. Each soldier wore a specially manufactured cloth arm patch featuring the words “Free Arabia” written in German and Arabic. Perhaps the most famous Arab formation in the German army was the Special Formation Unit (*Sonder*

Verbande) 287, also known as the Deutsche-Arabische Legion, which consisted of three battalions, including Arab personnel and a German officer staff. In these various subgroups, the Legion's Arab troops saw service in numerous theaters of the war, from the Caucasus to Greece to Tunisia and against Yugoslav partisans.

Generally, the Germans placed little value on the competence of these Arab volunteer units; even when they were pressed into battle, the Germans still did not view them as capable of doing more than rearguard duty or coastal defense. But there was at least one exception: An elite demolition and engineering unit was developed with nearly 100 Arabs handpicked by a certain German officer then stationed in Hammamet, Tunisia, Captain Schact of the First Parachute Brigade. Schact described them as a mix of "Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians, Senussi, Tuaregs, Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqi and desert Arabs." The unit was flown to Berlin for training at the rigorous Wittstock Parachute School and then fought with great effectiveness behind Allied lines during the battle for Tunisia.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of Arabs who volunteered to fight alongside the Germans. One military observer suggested that up to 13,000 Arabs volunteered for service with the Axis powers during the war, about half of whom were directly in the German army and other German outfits, with the balance in the forces of Vichy France. Their direct military contribution was negligible, but, it was noted, they furnished "rolls upon rolls of propaganda film for the German war effort."⁴⁷

There are many reasons that these men joined up with the Germans. Some were motivated by hatred of the French colonialists and admiration for any power that could defeat them. Others were keen to be on the winning side of the war, especially at a time when the Axis was in ascendance. For others, there was an economic incentive, the opportunity for work and pay when times were rough. Hatred of Jews surely played a role. As posters and flyers from the period attest, playing the "Jewish card" was a central theme of Axis propaganda and no doubt a substantial motivating factor. Although there is no specific record of Arab units participating in German-led or -inspired attacks on Jews

per se, their very existence is noteworthy because they reflect a certain measure of zealous commitment by some Arabs to the larger German war effort.

Another category of “villain”—a notch still higher on the ladder of collusion—included those Arabs who volunteered their services to assist directly in the persecution of Jews. No one compelled these Arabs to work alongside the German authorities, host Gestapo officers—not just regular German army men—in their homes, track down Jewish laborers, break into Jewish houses to ransack property, or inform on their Jewish compatriots.⁴⁸ These Arabs were full partners in the Nazi, Vichy, and Fascist brutality against local Jews.

Tunisia’s National Archives, for example, include oral testimonies, offered by both Frenchmen and Arabs, against a man named Youssef Ben Hamida Boufheri. According to these accounts, Boufheri guided German patrols as an armed member of a German squad, pillaged homes and businesses, and even commanded a group of other Arabs pressed into labor service to work for the Germans.⁴⁹ In another file, a Vichy official recounted how “young Tunisians accompanied by [German] soldiers would present themselves at the houses of Jews and, under this threat, get themselves served something to drink and eat. The Jews consider themselves happy when [the Tunisians] don’t demand their wives or daughters....”⁵⁰

Amos Shofan, whose family passed the occupation with their ill grandfather in Gabès, told of the Sabbath morning in 1943 when German troops arrived to round up Jewish laborers. With two Arab translators leading the way, the Germans entered the town’s main synagogue. Amos recalled that his father asked to let the congregants finish their prayers, but the Germans refused. When the local rabbi urged everyone to go outside and accept their fate, Amos’s father started a fight with the Arabs, whom he knew from the town. It was a losing battle. Together, the Arabs and the Germans beat him, dragged him on the ground, and took him and his two eldest sons to work at the local airstrip, unloading military ammunition. The Arabs, Amos said scornfully, were the worst sort of collaborators: They were “squealers.”⁵¹

A British journalist, who entered the town of Gafsa with Allied troops just hours after it had been abandoned by the Germans, was shocked at the extent of the plunder. “All the Jews in the town have been pillaged by the Arabs acting under German encouragement,” wrote Philip Jordan in his wartime memoir. “Even the doors and windows have been stolen. It is horrible.”⁵²

In his journal, Paul Ghez related how German soldiers and “Arab hoodlums” together launched late-night raids into Jewish neighborhoods in Tunis. At the beginning, he wrote, the forays were limited to petty larceny and harassing local passers-by. As time passed, the situation worsened. One night in mid-January, he recalled, “The Germans and their acolytes entered into private lodgings and extorted money and provisions. Two women were violated under the eyes of their husbands and children, taken under threat of revolvers.” Eventually, even the German authorities grew concerned at the extent of lawlessness and mayhem produced by this German-Arab entente. German army commanders solved the problem by issuing orders prohibiting German soldiers from entering the Jewish quarter of Tunis.⁵³

Jewish survivors of the German occupation frequently told stories of Arab informants. Tzvi Haddad, for example, recounted how one Saturday morning in 1943, two Arabs led two Germans to the houses of all the Jewish goldsmiths in his hometown of Gabès, extorting from each along the way.⁵⁴ According to Maurice Yaish, Arabs accompanied German soldiers throughout Tunis, picking out Jews to demand identification cards.⁵⁵ Haim Mazuz recalled how “the Arabs incited the Germans against us,” pointing out Jews in the streets of the town of al-Hama; “‘This is a Jew’ and ‘This is a Jew,’” he remembered them saying.⁵⁶ The wife of Abraham Sarfati, from La Goulette, told of Arabs who “were happy in the fact that they would make trouble for the Jews.... I would hear groups and the Arabs would lead them [the Germans] to Jewish homes, saying ‘There zig-zig.’ That means prostitute.”⁵⁷

Paul Ghez, who ran the Jewish recruitment service in Tunis, related the story of Arabs who were enraged by an Allied raid on the el-Aouina aerodrome in Tunis that left dozens dead. Bent on seeking vengeance, they attacked a group of Jews and denounced six of them to the Germans for having signaled to Allied bombers. Luckily for the Jews, even the Germans eventually recognized the absurdity of the charge; after all, it is patently impossible for a pilot to discern hand signals while flying at more than 15,000 feet. But, as Ghez explained, there was a long moment when the Jews feared for their lives—and with good reason.⁵⁸

When a similar accusation was made against Victor Nataf, a young rabbinical student from Ariana, a Tunis suburb, he did pay with his life. Piecing together the story from various documents, it appears that four local Arabs from Ariana, all of whom were previously known to the Nataf family, denounced Nataf to the Germans on December 13, 1942. They accused Nataf of sending directional signals to aid Allied bombers. In fact, all Nataf had done was light Sabbath candles, which could be seen flickering through the blackout curtain that hung in every Tunis home. That same evening, a German soldier—accompanied by the four Arabs—burst into the Natafs' house, found Victor sleeping, and arrested him. Six days later, without a trial, he was pronounced guilty and shot to death. On December 21, two days after the execution, a brief announcement appeared in the *Tunis-Journal*, noting that “the Jew Victor Nataf had been condemned to death for having compromised the security of German troops.”

After the Allies captured Tunisia, Victor's parents tried to convince the Free French authorities to pursue criminal charges against the four Arabs. According to the police complaint filed by Victor's mother, Ninette Nataf, one of the Arabs—a man named Said Ben Mustapha el-Ghomrasni—had harbored a grudge against the Nataf family ever since they had a financial dispute over a plan to invest in the opening of a small bakeshop. Although the Tunisian archives contain Mrs. Nataf's official deposition, the paper trail stops there. Whether the French authorities pursued the matter and arrested any of the four is not known. What is known is that the people of Ariana did not forget the injustice

done to Victor and renamed the street where his family home was located in his memory. The street name, however, no longer exists.⁵⁹

A particularly vicious, though secondhand, story of extortion and murder was told by Amos Shofan, who grew up hearing from his uncle this account of what happened in the largely Arab village of Hageb al-Ayoun. During the war, local Arabs frequently shook down Jews who sought refuge near the town and threatened to tell the Germans about workers trying to avoid forced labor. In one incident, a group of Arab thieves stopped Amos's uncle and a friend on a road and demanded not only money but their clothes as well, forcing the two men to walk home naked. Later that evening, the same group of thieves broke into a different Jewish home in the village, threatened the family, and demanded their savings. Not satisfied with what the poor father could scrape together, one of the thieves picked up the frightened man's one-year-old child, took him outside, and threw him on a cactus bush. The child, said Amos, died from the thorns, a painful, agonizing death. As of 2003, when Amos gave the interview, the child's father was still alive, living in Beersheva in Israel's southern Negev region, but he has not talked about the incident in decades.⁶⁰

Then, there was a small but influential group of Tunisian Arabs who threw their lot in with the Germans without reservation. Such was the case, for example, with the Guellaty-Okby clan, who even put their hotel on Boulevard Bab Menara at the disposition of the German authorities.⁶¹ A number of Arabs had so thoroughly aligned themselves with the Germans that they joined in the German retreat back to Europe. These included Rachid Driss, leader of the pro-Nazi Muslim Youth (*Jeunesse Musulmane*), and a merchant named Hamadi Boujemaa, who reportedly earned enough money thanks to his connections with the German occupation authorities that he was able to set himself up in Switzerland. Another notable, the village shaykh of Oulad Akrim, identified so closely with the Axis that when he found himself behind British lines, he tried to escape to the German side of the front. And when the Germans left the town of Gabès, both the provincial governor and the local magistrate reportedly left with them.⁶²

Following the German retreat and final collapse of Vichy rule in Tunisia, the Free French regime purged scores of officials, bureaucrats, and policemen on account of their collaboration. A significant number of these were Arabs.⁶³ In many of these cases, however, the official records do not explain the real reason for the punishment: Was it because these Arabs collaborated with the Germans? Was it because they persecuted Jews? Or was it because they took advantage of the German occupation to press their nationalist, anti-colonialist, anti-French politics? In the minds of French officials—both Vichyites and Free French—agitating for Tunisian nationalism deserved much greater penalty than participating in a campaign of often violent persecution of Jews. To purge an Arab for being a secret member of a nationalist cell was understandable; to purge an Arab for collusion in anti-Jewish activities was messy and complicated. Indeed, colonial archives provide clear examples of what most likely were anti-Jewish acts cloaked in nationalist terms to make the file seem more presentable.⁶⁴ Arabs were frequently accused of “pillaging”—a crime that often meant stealing property from abandoned Jewish homes or businesses—but no reference was actually made to the Jewish connection.⁶⁵ In their fanatical repression of Tunisian nationalists, Tunisia’s Free French “liberators” were no less zealous than the Vichyites. One post-liberation list of thirty-three Arabs suspected of anti-French activities during the German occupation included eight officials of Tunisia’s royal court and a number of anti-French propagandists, but only one person cited for anti-Jewish activity. Another list of 106 Arabs tried and convicted for acts perpetrated during the German occupation included seven originally sentenced to death and twenty-four more who received life imprisonment at hard labor. Some had volunteered to serve with German forces; others had provided information to the Germans or helped them requisition goods; most were convicted for “pillaging” or “theft” of empty homes. Though Jews were almost surely the victims of many of these crimes, there is not a single mention of a Jewish connection in the entire file.⁶⁶ On those rare occasions when the Jewish connection is clear, the culprits did not always face justice. The one Arab cited above for “anti-Jewish activity”—Azouz Ben Mustapha Ben Hadj Ali, alias Azouz el-Gonzali—was responsible “for introducing a German soldier to a Jewish home in La Marsa to permit him to violate an Israelite woman.” Despite the

severity of the crime—rape—the report did not actually note whether the German's Arab accomplice was ever arrested.⁶⁷

Indeed, in all my research, I came across only one case of an Arab who was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to prison for collaborating with foreign forces in the persecution of Jews. There may have been others, but their stories are either locked away in archives of French military tribunals, which remain closed for 100 years, or have been lost with the passage of time. The one story I did find is the gruesome saga of theft, deception, betrayal, and death that opened this book, the story of Hassen Ferjani and the three men of the Scemla family who were deported and then executed in Germany.⁶⁸

When I met him in Paris, Frédéric Gasquet had just completed a ninetyeight-page manuscript that related just about every detail of his family's tragedy. The one part he knew nothing about was Ferjani. He had never wanted revenge and had never really thought much about him. "I never sought vengeance," he told me. "With all the horrible news I have learned about my family, I am still a very happy man who has lived a very happy life." Yet when I told him I had details of that missing chapter in his family's story, he was anxious to listen. My gift to him was, I believe, one more measure of closure. This is what I told him.

On a steamy afternoon in May 2004, I met Mustapha Ferjani in the Ben Arrous neighborhood of Tunis, a suburb that did not even exist during the war. Mustapha, then sixty-eight years old, was Hassen Ferjani's nephew, the son of Hassen's older brother Muhammad. Mustapha was a lifelong nationalist himself; he was jailed in 1954 for his political activities. After independence, he spent thirty-one years working in the Ministry of Culture, directing libraries, organizing events, and delivering lectures. I had planned to meet Mustapha in Hammamet, but he had come to Tunis to celebrate the birth of a new grandchild. Professor Habib Kazdaghli, an exacting scholar and helpful colleague of mine at the University of Tunis at Manouba, arranged the meeting. He joined me and assisted with the interview.

Mustapha met us near a small café in his daughter's neighborhood. He was nervous and wanted to make a good impression; despite the heat, he sported a neatly knotted tie and a heavy wool blazer. He was a kindly man, heavysset, with courtly manners, and a deep, gravelly voice, honed by chain smoking. One can imagine his anxiety. After all these years, a "professor"—as I was introduced by Habib—had come all the way from the United States to ask about what likely was the darkest chapter in his family's history: the arrest and imprisonment of his uncle.

As we sat down to mint tea, he started by establishing the particulars. Hassen Ferjani was born in 1907, the third son in the Ferjani family of Hammamet. Married but without children (he and his wife later adopted a daughter), Ferjani operated a small fabric shop in the seaside village of Hammamet.

We then launched into the story of Hassen and the Scemlas. Was Hassen Ferjani a German informant? At first, Mustapha temporized. There were "two versions" of the story, he explained. According to one version, it was just the Scemlas' bad luck to have been stopped by the Germans. If it had been another day, with another guard manning the checkpoint or more traffic on the street, the Scemlas would have escaped and no one would ever have heard of his uncle. According to the second version, Hassen was, in fact, an agent provocateur acting on behalf of the Germans, a cunning man who arranged the entire scheme to trap the hapless Scemlas.

So far, to his credit, Mustapha was a dispassionate storyteller, recounting what happened between his uncle and Joseph Scemla—from his own perspective, of course—without histrionics or defensiveness. Later, as he warmed to the tale, Mustapha took a different tack. Hassen, he said, believed that Scemla's son, Gilbert—the former officer in the defeated French army—was spying for the Allies. A certain pro-Vichy Frenchman in Hammamet had warned Hassen to be on the lookout: If the Scemla family was moving to Hammamet, then it was most likely connected to something sinister. Gilbert may be a spy, the Vichy sympathizer told Hassen, on a mission to provide Allied bombers with forward signals of Axis targets.

If Hassen did conspire with the Germans to trap the Scemla family (an “if” that grew weaker as our conversation went on), it was not because the Scemlas were Jewish, Mustapha said, it was because they were traitors—Tunisians who had renounced their homeland and had instead sworn loyalty to the same republican France that had brutally suppressed Tunisia’s quest for independence. A half hour earlier, in the only emotional outburst of the interview, Mustapha had railed against the Tunis tribunal that had sentenced his uncle to death—“It was full of English, Jews and French,” he said. Now, at the end of our conversation, he wrapped his uncle in the nationalist flag.

But even the reflected glory of nationalist pride eventually wore thin. Mustapha and other Ferjanis of his generation grew up stuck with the “affaire des Juifs,” as he called it. Hassen’s prison fate hung over the family like a constant shadow. “We always knew about Hassen,” said Mustapha. “Every holiday we weren’t allowed to be happy like everyone else, because we had to spend the holiday bringing a package to prison.” Before the death sentence was commuted, he said, Hassen once believed he was so close to being executed that he even had a tearful “last visit” with his wife and mother.

But Mustapha recognized that his uncle was no common criminal. Hassen was charged with conspiracy after all, an act of perfidy that eventually led to the execution of three Jews at the hands of the Germans. (He claimed not to know the specifics of the Scemlas’ execution, but he was not surprised by my description of their grisly fate.) By Mustapha’s own admission, at least two of the Jews were completely blameless, and there is no evidence that the third, Gilbert, was the spy that Hassen’s defenders claimed he was.

Pressed on the details of the case, Mustapha’s defense of Hassen’s innocence unraveled. Why didn’t the Germans just arrest Gilbert, I asked, without having to go through the motions of the entire entrapment scheme? It would have been “too flagrant,” Mustapha said, implying that catching a Jewish family escaping to Allied lines was somehow a more acceptable rationale for deportation than snatching an Allied spy.

But if Hassen was no common criminal, neither was he considered—at least in Ferjani family lore—a guilty man. Instead, said Mustapha, the family always viewed his uncle as “a victim.” As for Hassen, Mustapha said he never heard him express remorse for what happened to the Scemlas. Then, almost as an afterthought, he mumbled something under his breath. “Maybe to himself,” he said.

When I related this exchange to Frédéric Gasquet in Paris, he sighed. “What Ferjani did was really terrible. But I have difficulty thinking that someone would do what he did if he truly expected it would have been so terrible for my family. Sure, he wanted money and was willing to risk my family in the process. But it is just too horrible to imagine that he was aware that by his betrayal my father would be decapitated.” I asked him what he would have hoped Mustapha had said to me. “That he asked for forgiveness,” he replied. “But since he—on behalf of his family—didn’t even fully recognize guilt, it would have been difficult to ask for forgiveness.” Taking one more step toward the closure that he desperately sought, Frédéric concluded, “If he had asked, I would have accepted it.”

How many Arabs qualify as “villains” of the Holocaust in Arab lands? It is difficult to quantify with precision the number who played significant roles in the persecution of Jews. With more than 100 recognized sites of forced labor spread from Morocco to Libya, thousands of Arab guards kept watch over Jewish prisoners. Even more Arab policemen, clerks, and other petty government officials facilitated the operation of Nazi, Vichy, and Fascist rule. Still more lent moral, political, and sometimes practical support to the anti-Jewish campaign—the informants, the collaborators, the hooligans, the bottle throwers, and the cheerleaders—but estimating the total is especially tricky.

All in all, the number was not inconsequential. Even if 90 percent of Arabs were benignly indifferent to the fate of Jews in these countries—a high estimate, in my view, though not wholly out of bounds—that still left perhaps as many as 2 million Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians, and Libyans as participants in, supporters of, or active sympathizers with the systematic targeting of Jews. One conclusion is clear: Without this measure of Arab

support—and, certainly, without this level of Arab acquiescence—the extent of Jewish suffering in Arab lands would have been much less.

Another conclusion is clear, too: It was impossible for Arabs in countries under Vichy rule, Italian conquest, or German occupation not to know about the persecution of Jews. It was everywhere. They may have been indifferent, but they were not unknowing. Even if they tried to shut their eyes to it, Arabs could hardly avoid seeing it. Throughout North Africa, the local version of Vichy's *statut des juifs* was promulgated through official channels and published in official gazettes with all legal niceties respected. In Morocco and Tunisia, anti-Jewish laws bore the signature of the Arab sovereign. The fact that neither monarch had a real choice in the matter did not lessen the fact that laws to which they lent their royal approval were well publicized, from the capital into the provinces. In Tunis, the Germans hung placards throughout the city that blamed “international Jewry” for the devastation of Allied bombing raids and explained that a 20-million-franc indemnity paid by the Tunis Jewish community would be distributed to local Arab charities. Jews pressed into forced labor were assembled in the heart of Tunis, at spots like the Mateur train station, just a few hundred yards from the Majestic Hotel, where the Germans were headquartered. The city's population could not have been blind to the fact that it was Jews, and only Jews, who were compelled in the first weeks of occupation to march off under armed guard, down the city's main boulevards, to forced labor camps. In the Tunisian countryside, thousands of Jews in towns and villages were forced to wear the Star of David, for all to see. In Algeria, it was Arabs and Europeans, after all, who took the slots of Jewish students expelled from schools because of the imposition of quotas. Similarly, in Morocco, Arabs and Europeans inherited jobs from Jews forced from their government posts due to anti-Jewish statutes. And so on.

Six decades ago, the Arabs of Tunis, Algiers, Casablanca, and hundreds of other places could not but have known about the “special treatment” being meted out to Jews. Admittedly, the war years in North Africa were a particularly confusing time. France was at war with itself, and it was not easy for Arabs to discern which Frenchmen—Republican or Vichyite—were less hostile to their interests and, therefore, more

deserving of support. The Germans manipulated these hatreds to their full advantage, in the best tradition of divide and rule. The result was that some Arabs participated in the Nazi, Vichy, and Fascist campaigns against Jews—many willingly; others, out of necessity—while most played no role at all. None, however, could truthfully claim ignorance about what was going on around them.

Notes

1. André Nahum, *Le roi des briks* (L'Harmattan, 1992), p. 50.
2. Sabille, *Les juifs de Tunisie sous Vichy et l'occupation*, p. 137.
3. Abraham Tzarfati oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3555067.
4. The lyrics—"Allez, allez, je souhaiterais être avec toi, Hitler"—are cited in Yves-Claude Aouate, "Les Algériens musulmans et les mesures antijuives du gouvernement de Vichy," *Pardes* 16 (1992), p. 199.
5. Quotation cited in *ibid.*, p. 199.
6. See, for example, Msellati, *Les juifs d'Algérie*, pp. 91, 97; Sabille, *Les juifs de Tunisie sous Vichy et l'occupation*, pp. 18–21, 137, 140; Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, pp. 107, 110.
7. Interview with Gad Shahar, conducted by Shira Simhony and relayed to me by e-mail correspondence, July 30, 2003.
8. Yehoshua Duweib interview, recorded September 13, 1964, in Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewish History, Hebrew University.
9. Victor Cohen oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3562862.
10. Yehuda Chachmon oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3562945.
11. Ernest-Yehoshua Ozan interview, recorded September 22, 1964, in Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewish History, Hebrew University.
12. Quotations cited in Aouate, pp. 193–194.
13. Miriam Levy oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3558527.
14. Isaac Jacques Smadja oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3760202.
15. Victor Cohen oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3562862.
16. E-mail correspondence from Corinne Boukobza-Hakmoun, March 12–14, 2004.
17. Yaacov Zrivy oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3562517.
18. Baudouin was impressed by this "charming lesson." See the excerpt from Baudouin's memoirs cited in Robert Assaraf, *Mohammed V et les juifs du Maroc à l'époque de Vichy* (Plon, 1997), p. 140.
19. Kenbib, *Juifs et musulmans au Maroc*, p. 607.

20. Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 71–72; confidential report of the American vice consul in Casablanca, April 17, 1943, U.S. National Archives, Casablanca consulate, 1942–1943, RG 84/350/65/12/7, Box 1.
21. Monthly report of the provisional commander of the Tunis gendarmerie for July 1941, to Vichy, August 7, 1941, French Foreign Ministry Archives, Series P, Tunisia, Quai D'Orsay, Paris.
22. Yehoshua Duweib interview, September 13, 1964, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewish History, Hebrew University.
23. Tzvi Haddad oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3563297.
24. “Conditions in the North African Prison Camps—Told by Those Released,” press release of the International Brigade Association, London, March 3, 1943 (Karl Marx Library file).
25. Testimony on this episode was delivered to the Algiers military tribunal in early 1944. *Secours Populaire Algérien. Le martyre des antifascistes dans les camps de concentration de l'Afrique du Nord*, pp. 7–8.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
27. For reference to Caboche's Arab adjutant Ahmed, see the April 1943 report on Djelfa, CDJC file 385–9, p. 9 (provenance uncertain).
28. *Secours Populaire Algérien*, p. 15.
29. In a daring ruse, the resourceful local delegate of the central Jewish community, a pharmacist named Maurice Taieb, was eventually able to arrange the prisoners' transfer by claiming a (nonexistent) agreement with German field marshal von Nehring for improved treatment of Jewish workers. See Sabille, *Les juifs de Tunisie sous Vichy et l'occupation*, p. 90.
30. Quotations from a confidential report by Major Kenneth Younger, early 1943, found among North Africa refugee camp reports, in the archives of the American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.
31. PRO FO 371/36244, March 4, 1943.
32. After liberation in 1943, Harry was eager to get into the fight against his tormentors. Rather than give him a rifle and send him into battle, British military intelligence had a more important task for him: to hunt down Axis war criminals and

bring them to justice. All quotations in this section are from the transcript of Harry Alexander's videotaped oral history interview, recorded February 11, 1992, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

33. PRO FO 443/43, letter to British authorities, dated February 19, 1943; letter to American authorities, dated December 20, 1942.

34. Abitbol, *The Jews of North Africa*, pp. 145–146. Kenbib presents a similar account in *Juifs et musulmans au Maroc*, p. 632.

35. Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, "L'opinion publique tunisienne, 1940–1944," in *La Tunisie de 1939 à 1945: Actes du Quatrième Séminaire sur l'Histoire du Mouvement National* (Tunisian Ministry of Education, 1989), p. 141.

36. Estéva to Vichy, August 5, 1940, Quai d'Orsay Archives.

37. Estéva to Vichy, August 9, 1940, Quai d'Orsay Archives.

38. Baudouin to Estéva, August 10, 1940, Quai d'Orsay Archives; Estéva to Vichy, September 27, 1940, Quai d'Orsay Archives.

39. Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, p. 145.

40. Tzvi Haddad oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3563297.

41. Interview of Yosef Huri, conducted by Tomer Zaksenberg, September 1, 2003.

42. Youssef Mimoun oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3564847.

43. Tzvi Haddad oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3563297.

44. Estéva to Vichy, May 23, 1941, Secret, Quai d'Orsay Archives.

45. Rey-Goldzeiguer, "L'opinion publique tunisienne," p. 142. The legacy of the 1940–1941 rioting lingered for years, well past war's end. Though the Tunisian government agreed in 1941 to pay financial compensation for the losses incurred by some of the victims, not until 1948 did it reach final agreement with claimants, who by and large accepted settlements amounting to half their original claims. See Tunisian National Archives, Series SG/9–121–125.

46. For details of Mohamed al-Madi, see François de Lannoy, "De la cagoule à la brigade nord-africaine: L'itinéraire de Mohamed el Maadi alias 'SS Mohamed,'" *39/45 Magazine* (Bayeux) 80 (1993), pp. 34–38.

47. Very few sources quantify Arab participation in Axis armies. For details of these Arab volunteers, see the work of self-styled historian Antonio J. Munoz, "Lions of the

Desert: Arab Volunteers in the German Army, 1941–1945,” *The East Came West: Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist Volunteers in the German Armed Forces, 1941–1945* (Axis Europa Books, 2001), pp. 203–238, from which this section is largely derived. The only other substantial study of the topic I ever found was a Spanish work by Carlos Caballero Jurado, *La espada del Islam: Voluntarios árabes en el ejército alemán, 1941–1945* (Garcia Espan, 1990).

48. For Arabs who hosted Gestapo officers in their homes, see Tunisian National Archives, Series MN 13–09/11.

49. Tunisian National Archives, Series MN 13–9/368.

50. The official cited was named A. Blili, secretary to the prefect of the Sécurité-Général, in Tunisian National Archives, Series MN Carton 13–09/37.

51. Amos Shofan interview, conducted by Tomer Zaksenberg, August 2003, Beersheva, Israel.

52. Jordan, *Jordan's Tunis Diary*, p. 208. German military archives point the finger at the Italians and tell the story of German military police who confiscated money that Arab looters and Italian soldiers stole from Jews in Gafsa and handed it over to a local Arab charity. See Military Archive (Freiburg), RH–26–90, Afrika Division, file no. 61.

53. Ghez, *Six mois sous la botte*, pp. 60–61.

54. Tzvi Haddad oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3563297.

55. Maurice Yaish oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3558900.

56. Haim Mazuz oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3564868.

57. Abraham Sarfati oral history, Yad Vashem interview no. 3555067.

58. Ghez, *Six mois sous la botte*, p. 72.

59. For the file on the case of Victor Nataf, see Tunisian National Archives, Series MN Carton 13–09/68; also, details from interview with former Ariana resident Charles Sarfati, Paris, October 27, 2005.

60. Interview of Amos Shofan, August 2003, Beersheva, Israel.

61. When Cherif el-Okby was killed in an Allied air raid, his death was even announced on Radio Berlin. See Rey-Goldzeiguer, “L’opinion publique tunisienne,” p. 148.

62. On Driss and Boujemaa, see a note dated August 31, 1944, in Tunisian National Archives, Series MN Carton 53–2/106; on the shaykh of Oulad Akrim, see the report of the chief of the Gouballat branch of the gendarmerie, June 17, 1943, Tunisian National Archives, Series MN Carton 13/09/141; on leaving from Gabès, see Boretz, *Tunis sous le croix gammée*, p. 72.

63. In Algiers, a man named Mohamed Bouras, president of the Federation of Muslim Scouts and a typist at the French internal security office, was shot for having given documents to a German agent. See Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, p. 108. For details of Tunisian collaborators, see Tunisian National Archives, Series MN 52/1/102, MN 52/1/16, MN 13–09/8, MN 13–09/61.

64. See, for example, a January 1943 police report recounting the extortion of 1,500 francs from a Tunisian Jew, Hellaï Moumou, by what the officer in charge described as a group of “destouriens,” the French-Arabic term for “constitutionalists,” meaning Tunisian nationalists. Tunisian National Archives, MN 13–09/47.

65. For the list of persons accused of collaboration with Axis forces in Bizerte, prepared by the chief of the gendarmerie’s legal bureau, June 4, 1943, see Tunisian National Archives, MN 13–09/61.

66. See document titled “État les condamnés proposés pour une commutation ou réduction de peine,” in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maroc-Tunisie, Tunisia series, no. 196, pp. 135–152.

67. Tunisian National Archives, MN 13–09/8.

68. Interview with Mustapha Ferjani, in the Ben Arrous neighborhood of Tunis, May 19, 2004. Includes details from a pre-publication manuscript of Frédéric Gasquet’s new book, *La Lettre de mon père; Félix Chiche, Livre d’or et de sang: Les juifs au combat, citations 1939–1945, de Bir-Hakeim au Rhin et Danube* (Édition Brith Israël, 1947), pp. 39–40; and Gaon and Serels, *Sephardim and the Holocaust*, p. 125.