**Colonial workers, imperial migrants and surveillance: policing in Le Havre, 1914–40**

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how the police and municipal authorities of Le Havre responded to the colonial *others* who passed through, or resided in, the Seine-Inférieureport between the outbreak of the First World War and the defeat of France in 1940. Interrogating how the police and urban authorities monitored migrants to the port, it reveals how Le Havre’s imperial and transnational space was distinctive in terms of the peoples who established themselves in the port, the ways in which they forged links with other peripheral locations throughout the French empire, and how the local authorities attempted to control migrants and incomers from the French overseas empire. It highlights particularities of Le Havre’s urban space — notably its lack of a university and prestigious *lycées*, its pre-1914 history of militant strike action, its role as France’s main transatlantic port, and the presence of a small colonial population with a narrow social-economic profile — and shows how these particularities resulted in the enactment and sometimes neglect of national policies and agendas according to specific local priorities.

Keywords:

Anticolonialism; colonial workers; French Empire; police surveillance; Third Republic

Recalling Le Havre of the 1930s in her memoirs, Simone de Beauvoir delighted in the ‘motley crowd’ that she and Sartre would brush past in the street, ‘where people from all parts of the world mingled’.[[1]](#endnote-1) An important node within France’s overseas empire, Le Havre had prospered over the course of the nineteenth century as a growing mercantile class imported cacao, coffee, cotton, hardwoods, minerals, spices and many other commodities from Africa and the Americas. Historically involved in the Atlantic trade, which had been based on slavery prior to its definitive abolition within the French Empire in 1848, the city also developed in the late nineteenth century as the most important French port for transatlantic travel, with the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, which had originated in Granville in 1862, launching its first transatlantic steamboat service between Le Havre and New York in 1865.[[2]](#endnote-2) By 1917, the former colonial minister Albert Lebrun on a visit to the Normandy port could declare that ‘A large part of colonial production and colonial life passes through here’.[[3]](#endnote-3) Le Havre may have lacked the stature of Marseille — which, in the publications that accompanied the national colonial exhibition of 1922, was characterized as a colonial metropolis — but it was a major site of imperial and global mobility, inhabited (either transiently or more permanently) by French subjects from Algeria (Algerian Muslims), by peoples from France’s overseas colonies (including French subjects from Indochina and French citizens from the Four Communes on the Senegalese coast), by French *protégés* from the protectorate of Morocco as well as the Indochinese protectorates of Tonkin and Annam, and by European migrants (notably Belgians and Spaniards).[[4]](#endnote-4)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, local politicians and businessmen in Le Havre actively sought to promote the city as a colonial port. A key figure in this process was Jules Siegfried, the former head of a trading company that imported raw cotton from India. Elected mayor of Le Havre (1878–86), member of the National Assembly (1895–97, 1902–22) and senator (1897–1900), Siegfried chaired the thirty-strong Senate ‘colonial group’ whose members favoured French settlement overseas.[[5]](#endnote-5) With his backing and that of the Chamber of Commerce, local businessmen developed major stakes in colonial expansion, a process for which John Laffey, in reference to Lyon, has coined the expression ‘municipal imperialism’.[[6]](#endnote-6) A Society of Commercial Geography was founded in 1884, followed by the Ecole pratique coloniale du Havre in 1908, the latter under the auspices of the Association Cotonnière Coloniale and with the support of the Ministry of Trade, the Colonial Ministry, the governor generals of French West Africa and Indochina, the town council and the Chamber of Commerce of Le Havre. Notwithstanding the political and economic agendas which compared the city with Marseille and Bordeaux, Le Havre’s imperial and transnational space was distinctive; it was made more so in terms of the peoples who established themselves in the port and, in turn, the ways in which the local authorities attempted to monitor migrants and colonial incomers.[[7]](#endnote-7)

In analysing these attempts to control colonial others, this article throws into relief the centrality of empire to municipal and regional politics between the outbreak of the First World War and the defeat of France in the Second, and shows how encounters between peoples from different cultures generated concerns about the spread of extremist or dangerous politics. Viewing imperial and transnational interactions through the analytical frame of one northern port, it supports the contention of Patrick Young and Phillip Whalen that the relationship between continental France and its overseas territories in the first half of the twentieth century was not mediated solely through Paris but was dependent upon local particularities and connections.[[8]](#endnote-8) In the case of Le Havre these particularities had to do with the shipping routes operating out of the port and the size and social composition of groups of colonial workers residing there. Le Havre, like Liverpool in Britain, was a large hub for departures to the USA. While many migrants from European countries passed through the port, it was not, unlike Marseille and Bordeaux, the natural port of entry to the metropole for subjects from French Algeria and colonies in west and central Africa. Certainly, workers from France’s colonies had been employed on the docks before the First World War, but substantial groupings were not established in the same way as in southern port cities, particularly Marseille.[[9]](#endnote-9) The colonial population in Le Havre remained small and retained a somewhat narrow social profile. Whereas both Marseille and Bordeaux attracted significant numbers of students from the colonies, Le Havre, an industrial port, lacked a university and prestigious *lycées*, and colonial migrants were invariably employed in low-paid jobs around the docks and on the shipping lines.[[10]](#endnote-10) As in Marseille and Bordeaux, migrant groups were invariably male and young; what marks out those residing in Le Havre is an absence of students from bourgeois colonial backgrounds. This had practical consequences for how police surveillance was carried out.

Recent studies have highlighted the role played by the overseas empire in forming and articulating French Republicanism under the Third Republic. Since Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler called for the metropole and colony to be treated ‘in a single analytic field’, research has considered how the peripheries (in the regions and overseas) shaped French policies at the centre before those same policies were transmitted back to the periphery.[[11]](#endnote-11) Jennifer A. Boittin has shown how black colonial migrants (Africans and Antilleans), along with that other marginalized group, women, transformed Paris after the First World War into a site of transnational connections, but has also raised the vexed question of how far experiences in Paris should be viewed as representative of the rest of metropolitan France.[[12]](#endnote-12) Of course, an earlier generation of historians had already challenged the totalizing myth of French centralization, stressing how the French state was shaped by competing loyalties to village, region and nation.[[13]](#endnote-13) The subsequent historiographical emphasis on the imbrication of republicanism and colonialism has generated a new series of works exploring what Robert Aldrich calls ‘regionalist imperialism’ under the Third Republic.[[14]](#endnote-14) Considerable attention has also been paid to issues of policing, race and ethnicity, and to the surveillance of suspicious characters (be they from France’s colonies or elsewhere in Europe) who were perceived as challenging the rule of law in France.[[15]](#endnote-15) The current article fits broadly into existing historiography on regional colonialisms; it uses, deliberately, a local frame of reference. Gregory Mann, in a 2006 article, urged that the ‘specificities of particular *places* be brought to the fore, not only to ground research empirically but also to disaggregate and cast new light upon colonial and postcolonial circumstances.’[[16]](#endnote-16) Using, among other sources, police and council records and local press reports, and interrogating the intersection of policing agendas, race, social order and colonial concerns in one port city, the following analysis aims to respond to Mann’s challenge. It contends that examining such interactions in Le Havre can shed new light on how different peoples, as Boittin terms it, ‘colonized’ the metropole, and can further prise open issues of policing and surveillance in *la plus grande France*.[[17]](#endnote-17)

A focus on mobility across the French empire and around metropolitan France requires the use of both national and regional archives; but while neglected material in departmental archives may be crucial in showing what was at stake in everyday lives, and how local concerns interacted with national and global ones, such sources are not without their limitations. Police surveillance documents pose problems of reliability and bias, while the people who were the focus of surveillance are largely silent, despite some instances of reported speech in statements. As Michael Goebel has noted about the reports filed by the police force which the Colonial Ministry created to carry out surveillance of colonial subjects in metropolitan France (centralized as the Service de Contrôle et d’Assistance en France des Indigènes des Colonies françaises (CAI) in 1923), the officials compiling the information were motivated by two fears, communism and anti-French agitation — and these fears coloured their reporting.[[18]](#endnote-18) A further problem with these documents, archived in the Archives nationales d’Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence, is that the CAI was preoccupied with only colonial subjects, notably those from Indochina and Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas Algerians fell under the remit of the Interior Ministry; peoples from France’s protectorates, including Morocco and Tunisia, and colonial subjects of other European powers were similarly outside the purview of the CAI. The categorization of ethnicities adopted by France’s colonial authorities has variously shaped and distorted histories which make use of these archives, but if reports by the locally based commissaires spéciaux (superintendents) of the Sûreté Générale are examined alongside those contained in the CAI files, the problem of colonial categorizations is obviated.[[19]](#endnote-19) The commissaires spéciaux, of which there were 329 throughout France in 1939, reported to the Interior Ministry via the Sûreté Générale, copying in the local prefect to reports, and were concerned with the political activities of *all* foreigners, including colonial subjects of other European powers, irrespective of which Parisian ministry was responsible for their surveillance. Nonetheless, problems of partiality remain: the twin fears of communist agitation and anti-French violence evidently provided the main stimulus to the surveillance.

In the case of Le Havre, the port had a pre-1914 history of militant strike action, prompting the Interior Ministry to place a commissaire spécial de la Sûreté in the port in 1912 to monitor workers’ movements, and it retained its reputation for militancy between 1919 and 1939.[[20]](#endnote-20) The town council was dominated by Léon Meyer, a radical-socialist who was mayor from 1919 until 1940, and who negotiated a fine line between political control of workers’ associations and support for trade union action, a tactic which exacerbated the split between the left-wing parties, the Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) and the Parti Communiste français (PCF), after 1920.[[21]](#endnote-21) The timeframe adopted here begins five years before Meyer’s election and incorporates two periods when migration came to the fore of the concerns of municipal and police authorities and the local press in Le Havre. Analysis of the first, the years 1916 to 1920, explores the arrival of colonial workers in the port during the First World War. Analysis of the second, the years 1925 to 1934, turns to the threat which locally based colonial workers were believed to pose to French imperial interests — a threat which increasingly exercised the Sûreté Générale in Paris, the prefect of Seine-Inférieure and the sub-prefect of Le Havre, and which provoked the interior minister to assert in July 1927 that Le Havre was ‘the most important departure point’ for the export of seditious publications and militant anti-imperialism to France’s colonies.[[22]](#endnote-22)

**Policing colonial workers and migrants: national and local priorities 1914–40**

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century there has been a growing body of historical research on the policing of migrants in France which has demonstrated the unevenness of experience for French colonial subjects under the Third Republic.[[23]](#endnote-23) The colonized peoples of the French empire had differing legal statuses depending on the territory in which they lived. Slaves of the ‘four old colonies’ of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane and Réunion became citizens with the abolition of slavery in the French Empire in 1848, as did inhabitants of other areas colonized under France’s first empire (the Quatre Communes of Senegal and the remnants of French India), although in Senegal and French India their citizenship was ill-defined and contested.[[24]](#endnote-24) The ‘Code de l’Indigénat’ (1881) ensured that Muslim Algerians were French subjects rather than citizens, while peoples of France’s new colonial possessions of the nineteenth century, French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa and Indochina, were also, for the large part, subjects. A key consequence of this heterogeneous legal situation was that different groups of colonial migrants enjoyed different rights even if, as will be seen, municipal authorities frequently lumped them together.[[25]](#endnote-25) The situation was further complicated by the fact that colonial peoples fell under the purview of different central ministries according to whether they were colonial subjects, French subjects from Algeria (and therefore the responsibility of the Interior Ministry), or *protégés* from French protectorates.

In this national context, ports, as points of entry to the nation-imperial state, and home to transient populations and a fluctuating workforce of sailors and dockworkers, were a source of particular concern for French authorities, requiring a different type of policing from inland cities.[[26]](#endnote-26) Police duties in French ports regularly included, in addition to the usual responsibilities, counter-espionage, passport control, investigating the smuggling of drugs and other contraband goods, and preventing the trafficking of people, much of which involved maintaining an awareness of what was going on among mobile populations nationally and internationally.[[27]](#endnote-27)

In Le Havre during the First World War and the following two decades, national-imperial agendas and priorities increased pressure on these aspects of local port policing, the central authorities being anxious to monitor any groups perceived as a threat to national security or urban stability. Foreigners attracted particular mistrust; the mass migrations caused by the war compounded suspicions, especially when large numbers of workers from China and parts of the French Empire in Africa and Asia were recruited as workers to maintain France’s industries between 1914 and 1918. During the First World War, Albert Thomas’s Ministry of Armaments distinguished between white foreign workers on the one hand, and Chinese and colonial workers (who were categorized together) on the other, with the latter group being increasingly subject to military control after France began to bring in large numbers of non-Europeans in 1916.[[28]](#endnote-28) Over half a million foreigners worked in French industries and on the land between 1914 and 1918, the majority coming from Europe, principally Spain (approximately 300,000). Another 300,000 came from overseas and included Algerians, Indochinese, Chinese, Moroccans, Tunisians and Malagasies.[[29]](#endnote-29) Measures were taken to repatriate all colonial subjects and Chinese workers after the war, regardless of the specious legality of the exclusion. This process was made all the easier by the implementation of a system of regimentation of colonial and Chinese workers, so that by the end of 1919 fewer than 30,000 remained of the approximately 300,000 African, Indochinese and Chinese workers who had travelled to France since 1915.[[30]](#endnote-30) After this, and with workers needed for reconstruction in the devastated northern regions of the country, colonial migrants once more entered France, but the authorities were now determined to extend the means of controlling them.[[31]](#endnote-31) In Paris, this was achieved by the reorganization of the immigration service at the Préfecture de Police and the creation of a new surveillance network targeting North Africans to anticipate and prevent dissent. In addition, the Colonial Ministry, under the leadership of Albert Sarraut, created the CAI in 1923 to monitor the political activities of Indochinese, African, Caribbean and Malagasy migrants.[[32]](#endnote-32)

During the First World War, the policing of these workers was determined by nationally set priorities — after all, the country was on a wartime footing — but it was also very much a consequence of local conditions. With its docks importing coal supplies and troops, its armaments factories (Schneider et Cie du Creusot, Tréfilieries et Lamonoirs du Havre), its metallurgy works such as Bassot, its refrigeration works, and its naval construction, Le Havre was an important destination for the labour force brought into France from its colonies, from China and from Europe. By 1917, 3,700 Belgians, Spanish and Poles had been listed as resident in Le Havre, along with an estimated 1,300 North African colonial workers.[[33]](#endnote-33) A particularity of the situation in Le Havre was that it exposed the port to the presence of different national authorities and their jurisdictions. The city was placed under the control of a military governor on 29 August 1914 (a situation which lasted for the duration of the war), but it was also a base for forces of the Triple Entente, with 1.9 million British soldiers, subject to their own military rule, passing through the port; additionally, with the relocation of the Belgian government between 13 October 1914 and November 1918 to Sainte-Adresse (a north-west suburb), it was home to a significant Belgian community, the government being accompanied by Belgian police forces and refugees.[[34]](#endnote-34) As with the rest of France, in Le Havre colonial workers who were recruited after 1916 fell under the jurisdiction of the French army, as well as being subject to surveillance by the municipal police forces and interventions by the city council. In Le Havre they also fell under the jurisdiction of the British army. Intervention by external army forces had an impact on the livelihoods of *havrais* workers and caused disgruntlement — one example being the ruling by the commander of the 3rd Region (under which Le Havre fell), following a request from the British authorities, that *havrais* café owners could not serve any colonial workers employed by the British.[[35]](#endnote-35) The most politically contentious example of a British military intervention occurred on 19 January 1919, when the General of the Division in the British Zone brought Chinese worker number 28435 in front of a court martial and sentenced him to twenty-eight days’ imprisonment for having touched the shoulder of Mlle Auguste Charles with his hand. The mayor’s office and the central police station protested (the worker being employed by the French and living at the Harfleur camp), but they were powerless to prevent a custodial sentence.[[36]](#endnote-36) Such administrative impotency increased local tensions.

After 1919, the monitoring and policing of migrant workers was additionally influenced by the nationally held fear of radical politics and the perceived threat posed by immigration, along with a local collective memory in Le Havre of what Tyler Stovall adjudges the most ‘serious race riot in wartime France’, namely bloody violence on the night of 18 June 1917 in which fifteen Moroccan workers were killed and many injured.[[37]](#endnote-37) One legacy of the riot, in addition to bitter relations between Moroccan and *havrais* workers which prevented the forging of any meaningful transnational worker alliances, was a specific police focus on groups deemed to have the potential to disturb the social order.[[38]](#endnote-38) Despite its privileged maritime position, its links with northern Europe and Paris, and its role as an imperial port, Le Havre became home to proportionally fewer foreigners and colonial subjects over the course of the twentieth century than comparable cities elsewhere in France. Indeed, Claude Malon has estimated (and this research concurs) that by 1937, when colonial products coming through the port of Le Havre accounted for 27% of all imports, there were approximately only 100 migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa (mainly employed on the docks), 200 from the Maghreb and approximately 200 from Indochina, and these figures were remarkably stable throughout the interwar period.[[39]](#endnote-39) Although small in numbers, these migrants were influential — a paradoxical situation that partly explains the differential anxieties which the municipal authorities displayed when policing peoples viewed as ‘others’. With the establishment of the ‘Restaurant intercolonial’ by Dang (Louis) Van Thu in 1925, the city became a centre of Vietnamese worker associations, provoking the prefect of Seine-Inférieure in 1930 to express the fear that the city had assumed a critical role in spreading anti-imperialist propaganda to the colonies.[[40]](#endnote-40) 1931 saw the establishment of a local branch of the Ligue de la Défense de la Race Nègre, whose leading members (one from Senegal, the other from Guinea) forged links with Dakar, creating an anti-colonial nexus that sidestepped Paris but was not without sway in the French colonies. As a sub-prefecture of the *département* of Seine-Inférieure, Le Havre was subject both to nationally enforced agendas and to departmental ones (with the prefecture of Seine-Inférieure being notoriously energetic in its pursuit of those colonial subjects perceived as undesirable), presenting an ideal locus for uncovering how national priorities and local conditions interacted in policing colonial migrants outside Paris.[[41]](#endnote-41)

**Colonial workers and Le Havre during the First World War**

Colonial workers had been in Le Havre long before the outbreak of the First World War. At times of labour shortage theCompagnie Générale Transatlantique had made use of Algerian workers both on its boats and on the dockside and, with the commencement of hostilities, others arrived from mines in northern occupied France.[[42]](#endnote-42) Between 1914 and 1916 the majority of colonial workers in Le Havre were these ‘free’ workers, designated thus to distinguish them from those recruited workers who arrived after the ministerial circular of 29 June 1916 and the establishment of the Service de l’organisation des travailleurs coloniaux (SOTC), which codified the recruitment of workers from North Africa, eventually ensuring that those who broke regulations were subject to military law.[[43]](#endnote-43) By January 1917 Le Havre was experiencing tensions between long-term residents of the port, Belgian workers who had arrived after the Belgian government’s relocation to Sainte-Adresse, and colonial workers — tensions which were reported by the police and in the local press.[[44]](#endnote-44) A low point for French morale and France’s war effort overall, the first half of 1917 has been identified by Stovall as witnessing a series of ‘racial incidents’ across France.[[45]](#endnote-45) While the *département* of Seine-Inférieure was listed in June 1917 as one of the eight across France with low morale, the local army commander bemoaned the sudden worsening of morale across Le Havre in particular.[[46]](#endnote-46)

As early as December 1916, relations between the colonial workers, the military forces, the police and other inhabitants of the port were strained. Absenteeism was high, with employers reporting that workers were going missing. The French authorities put this down to the harsh winter conditions and language difficulties.[[47]](#endnote-47) There was also concern among the police and the mayor of the Graville district that differentiated monitoring of workers was difficult; for reasons that will become apparent, the police were particularly anxious to distinguish between Algerians who had travelled of their own volition to Le Havre to find work, and recruited Moroccan workers.[[48]](#endnote-48) Writing to Contre-Amiral Didelot (the military governor of Le Havre) on 24 December 1916, commissaire spécial Italiani (the commissaire spécial de la Sûreté who had been sent to Le Havre in 1912 to monitor workers’ movements) advised him of a suspicion that passes to which free colonial workerswere entitled, allowing unregulated movement around the city, had been ‘granted in good faith by police commissaires and town halls to Moroccans who have managed to pass themselves off as Algerians’.[[49]](#endnote-49) The decision to create Le Havre’s own Bureau des Affaires indigènes (BAIH), officially opened on 24 June 1917 and an annex to the existing Bureau in Rouen, was a direct response to these problems. Hallouin, an inspector in the auxiliary police, interpreter and director of the BAIH, offered a detailed overview of the situation which had existed in Le Havre at the beginning of 1917.[[50]](#endnote-50) Fluent in Arabic, he was sympathetic to the workers, asserting that ‘our colonial Arabs are men and should be treated as such’ but that while a ‘progressive fusion between them and us’ might be possible in their own countries, in France, ‘where laws, mores, customs, everything surprises or shocks them’, surveillance was necessary as ‘a safeguard for them and for us’.[[51]](#endnote-51) Colonial subjects from the Maghreb, designated by the ethno-racial term ‘Arabs’, were, he claimed, prey to exploitation by Moroccan fellow workers (who, having established cheap restaurants and cafés, introduced them to gaming and prostitutes, quickly separating them from their savings) and by unscrupulous boarding-house owners who charged them exorbitant rents and offered them the most insalubrious of lodgings.[[52]](#endnote-52) This justification for the creation of the BAIH, as with national legislation for surveillance of colonial workers, was redolent with colonial paternalism.[[53]](#endnote-53) The assessment by civilian authorities of the situation meanwhile relied on discourses of racial hierarchies and a rehearsal of well-worn value judgements typical of the French administration in colonized territories. Both the minutes of the municipal counciland the local press raised the issue of hygiene, *Le* *Petit Havre* (which described itself as ‘republican, democratic and socialist’ and was in favour of colonial expansion) in April 1917 calling for a triage in order to deal with what it perceived (without much empirical justification) to be the high number of Moroccan workers in the town so that ‘morally and physically undesirable subjects’ could be identified and ‘all dangerous influence on our French population’ avoided.[[54]](#endnote-54) On 1 July 1917, Didelot wrote confidentially to the sub-prefect of Seine-Inférieure, announcing the creation of the BAIH to deal with all ‘natives of North Africa’ living in Le Havre and the decision (first taken in February 1917) to house all such workers in barracks at their place of work rather than allowing them to live freely in the city. Didelot concluded: ‘From the point of view of hygiene, it can only be advantageous in breaking up groups of natives of which the uncleanliness and cohabitation could create ideal locations for the outbreak of contagious diseases.’[[55]](#endnote-55)

Resonances with the administrative norms adopted in the colonies were evident in other proposals and practices. For example, exchanges in early January 1917 between the police commissaire of the Graville Sainte-Honorine district (where the metallurgy works were located) and Didelot discussed the advantages of enacting in Le Havre the same policies of surveillance which were in existence in French North Africa, the commissaire proposing that the geographical situation of the *havrais* workers, located in a small area to the east of central Le Havre and north of the docks, was (unlike in Rouen and in Paris, where workers were much more dispersed) ideal for containing the colonial workforce under the surveillance of an ‘indigenous’ group leader who would act as a liaising agent with the local police station.[[56]](#endnote-56)

The riot that took place on 18 June 1917 expedited the push for segregation which had been underway since the end of December 1916. According to the police report dated 19 June, the violence was the consequence of an altercation between a French soldier, Lucien Ouf, on leave from the front, and three Moroccan dock workers. Of the two recorded eyewitnesses, one, Jean Senaux, reported that insults were exchanged after the solider alighted from a tram on the corner of the rue Berthelot. The other witness, thirteen-year-old Albert Breul, reported that the solider was accompanied by another young man who shouted out ‘Filthy race’ to a passing Moroccan worker. The ensuing brawl led to the young man being stabbed by the Moroccan worker (who whistled for backup) and the solider being hit over the head with a bottle.[[57]](#endnote-57) Two Moroccan workers were arrested but the situation rapidly deteriorated. Shots were fired in the rue Gustave Brindeau and a crowd of between 300 and 400 people gathered around the Bescond café, fatally injuring four Moroccan workers in an action that the commissaire spécial, writing to the governor on 19 June, described as a lynch mob.[[58]](#endnote-58) Over the course of 19 June, regular bulletins noted the number of injured Moroccan workers steadily increasing, with the commissaire spécial reporting to Didelot that 23 (one unidentified) were severely injured, and three (two unidentified) were dead.[[59]](#endnote-59) In the immediate aftermath of the riot, Moroccan workers lodging in the city were rounded up and transported by motorized convoys to the Fort de Tourneville as a ‘measure of safety’.[[60]](#endnote-60) Discussions took place between Didelot and the sub-prefect about expelling all Moroccan workers, but instead, when the armament factories objected, Didelot ruled that by 15 August 1917 all Moroccan workers had to be housed in barracks provided by factories and were forbidden from living in the city itself. As Hallouin reported, the only large company that refused to house its workers was the Compagnie générale transatlantique, and it was this objection that prevented what he termed a complete ‘purging’ of the town.[[61]](#endnote-61)

How far were the tensions underlying the riot of June 1917 specifically ‘racial’? Stovall, in his article of 1998, posits that it was the worst example of racial violence in France during the war and led directly to the regimentation of the colonial workers in the agglomeration.[[62]](#endnote-62) (In fact, the decision to place all recruited colonial workers in barracks had already been taken in February 1917 by the military authorities, under pressure from the town council and the police commissaires of Le Havre.[[63]](#endnote-63)) Certainly — and analogously with the situation which Jacqueline Jenkinson identified in the riots in British port cities in 1919 — racial antagonism, here between ‘Arabs’ and whites, was evident; but in the case of Le Havre there were broader xenophobic factors in play. Racist discourse was well established in France by the beginning of the twentieth century, with economic and social pressures providing the stimulus for popular racist incidents, but growing tensions between the different groups which found themselves in Le Havre during the war meant that Belgian refugees were also popular targets for suspicion and xenophobic outbursts, which became more frequent as the hardships of the war increased. For example, in April 1916, three Belgians employed at the military automobile factory were arrested on suspicion of being German (although they were eventually released).[[64]](#endnote-64) In June 1917, ten days after the riot between Moroccan workers and French citizens, an anonymous letter sent to Didelot led to a police investigation into reports that Belgians were benefitting from favourable food prices thanks to the ‘Belgian colony’ in the port, and that they were ‘making free with Frenchwomen’ whose husbands were away at the front.[[65]](#endnote-65) The violence against Moroccans was a product of latent racialized thinking, but the threat which Moroccans were perceived as posing was also readily articulated with reference to white migrants when local women were believed to be in danger.[[66]](#endnote-66)

Although just one exceptionally violent manifestation of a more general paroxysm of xenophobia, the events of June 1917 constituted a turning point in the colonial dynamics in the port. While the police and military reports evinced anxiety about the morale of Moroccan workers, civilian authorities quickly offered a racialized and monocausal interpretation of the violence. No French people were arrested; local newspapers *Le Havre Éclair* and *Le Petit Havre* both placed culpability firmly on the Moroccans, claiming that the fight had been provoked by a Moroccan dockworker and that a Moroccan day labourerhad been arrested for stabbing Lucien Ouf.[[67]](#endnote-67) When the council met on 26 June to discuss the violence, the deputy mayor, the socialist Jules Jennequin, characterized the incident as ‘something or nothing’, provoked by a child throwing stones, which, because of the ‘excitability’ of the Moroccans, had got out of hand when a French soldier on leave had ‘leapt to the defence of the child’ and ‘was badly roughed up and actually stabbed by the Moroccans’.[[68]](#endnote-68) The radical-socialist councillor Léon Meyer condemned the ‘lamentable’ violence, observing that ‘the population of Le Havre had not revealed themselves to be very chivalrous in these circumstances’, and adding that he had seen a Moroccan pulled off a tram and assaulted without any provocation; but the council minutes, as well as the newspaper reports, narrativize the events along typical colonial lines, essentializing ‘excitable Moroccans’ and failing to contest the claim in Jennequin’s account that the stabbed French soldier had been defending some French children.[[69]](#endnote-69)

This official skewing of events created a local shorthand to stress the undesirability of foreign, particularly Moroccan, workers, a prejudice which resurfaced after the war. In February 1920, one Ernest Legoffre organized a petition signed by seventy-two residents, and wrote to the mayor demanding that the Moroccans who lived in his street be evicted. Complaining that they posed a ‘physical and moral danger’ which was particularly pernicious to women, he claimed that the very presence of the workers ran the risk of making the street into another ‘rue Berthelot’ (the name of the street that was at the epicentre of the riot had quickly become a synecdoche for the riot).[[70]](#endnote-70) A thorough investigation by commissaire Pierre Bataille concluded: ‘to be fair, I must add that none of these men [the Moroccans] have threatened anyone and until now they have respected the property of the local residents’.[[71]](#endnote-71) Nevertheless, he instrumentalized the fear of a re-run of the riot of 1917 and advised the mayor ‘that measures be taken by the administration to force these Moroccans to live in another area and other residences where they will not be able to bother anyone’.[[72]](#endnote-72)

As the discussions leading to the creation of the BAIH show, colonial fears and prejudices about hygiene had been rife before June 1917, but the riot and its aftermath led to an importation of a model of urban segregation like that which existed, for example, in Rabat and in the French Indian outpost of Pondicherry between the ‘white town’ and ‘black town’, and which in Le Havre targeted specifically Moroccans.[[73]](#endnote-73) Immediately this was demonstrated by the removal of recruited Moroccan workers who had been previously housed freely in the port. Monthly police raids were carried out in the town, concentrating particularly on the narrow streets north of the docks, to ensure that Moroccan workers were contained ‘for their own safety’.[[74]](#endnote-74) Yet such segregation was not straightforward. Le Havre had a substantial population (*c.* 400) of Algerian workers.[[75]](#endnote-75) Exempt from the ban on living in the port by virtue of being ‘French’ Algerians, colonial subjects rather than *protégés*, they nevertheless found themselves suffering police harassment and eviction by landlords. Delegations of Algerian workers sent two anonymous letters to Didelot, asking for protection against the police raids that were forcing them to leave their rented accommodation; seeking his intervention with the town council, they stressed that as they were French they fell beyond the scope of his military order.[[76]](#endnote-76) The riot of June 1917 resulted in the town recognizing and enacting a clear hierarchy which privileged Algerians above Moroccans, with the commissaire Italiani, anxious to avoid a repetition of the violence, stipulating that Moroccan workers be segregated from Algerians and French workers, and thus reifying within the bounds of the city a pervasive French antipathy towards the inhabitants of this part of the Maghreb.[[77]](#endnote-77) Stovall and Driss Maghraoui have shown that antagonism towards Moroccans in France was more marked than towards Algerians: Morocco had been a French protectorate since only 1911, and the bloody colonial war which continued until the end of 1914 following the French seizure of Fez had generated a popular image in the French press of Moroccans as belligerent savages (in contrast with the loyal colonial subjects of Algeria).[[78]](#endnote-78) This reification was not confined to policing alone. The council was anxious to address the ‘Moroccan problem’ and, despite priding itself on its secularism, discussed proposals for encouraging religious practices among the workers, citing the example of how the imbrications between religion and law were effectively used in Algeria and Morocco for controlling local populations.[[79]](#endnote-79) Unlike Algerian workers in Le Havre, Moroccans needed tutelage.

The policy of barracking adopted in Le Havre was not exceptional, but further measures considered for containing colonial workers were, and they make evident the explicitly anti-Moroccan fears in play. Two weeks after the riot, commissaire Italiani wrote confidentially to the governor, proposing that ‘No native [*indigène*] will be permitted to walk around the town if he is not wearing a green armband with a red crescent on a white badge authorized by my general staff.’[[80]](#endnote-80) Here Italiani was obscuring the legal classification which distinguished between non-renouncing Algerian Muslims and *protégés* from Morocco: after the implementation of the 1881 Code de l’Indigénat in Algeria, *indigène* signified a specific legal category for Muslims in three *départements* of Algeria, yet both Didelot and Italiani invariably applied the term to all North Africans, including *protégés* from the protectorate of Morocco. The proposal was in any case rejected as impractical, since the armband could be removed. Nevertheless, it resurfaced in 1920 when the chief engineer of the highways department wrote to the sub-prefect of Le Havre following further incidents between Moroccan and French workers. This time, and on the suggestion of the sub-prefect, the insignia was to be sewn onto the clothes of Moroccan workers so that they could be distinguished from Algerians. The measure was in practice until all Moroccan workers were repatriated. Le Havre appears to have been the only municipality to have adopted such a measure which, with hindsight, provides a local example of a practice uneasily prefiguring the imposition on Jews of the wearing of the Star of David following the decree issued on 7 June 1942 in Nazi-occupied France.

The antipathy towards Moroccan workers became more marked again in 1919 and 1920, exacerbated by the return of soldiers from the war, an acute housing shortage, and the governmental policy of repatriating colonial workers.[[81]](#endnote-81) The incidents of June 1917 (the ‘rue Berthelot’) were now evoked in a way which relied on commonplace colonial assumptions but which was inflected with a specific local memory.[[82]](#endnote-82) Three months before the war ended, Didelot had written to commissaire spécial Italiani, stating that he had authorized the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique to employ approximately a hundred Moroccans to work unloading at the port on the condition that they be subjected to special police surveillance so that a repeat of what he termed the ‘brawl of June 1917’ could be avoided.[[83]](#endnote-83) Suggesting that the cause of the riot was simple rivalry, he asked that the commissaire consult with the dockers’ union about this decision. Two days later Italiani reported that the union had responded favourably: ‘François Louis is persuaded that the North African workforce is necessary to fill the gaps left among the dockers by mobilization and that there is no reason why these Moroccans and Algerians, who are essentially big children, should be treated differently from French workers; he added that he actually preferred Arabs to Spanish workers.’[[84]](#endnote-84) (Spanish dockworkers had been a target of local hostility before, having been accused of strikebreaking during the industrial conflict of 1910.[[85]](#endnote-85)) The discussion of ‘foreign workers’ here shows a certain flexibility in attitudes to outsiders. Louis’s discourse, reliant upon the infantilization of North Africans, was certainly consistent with typical colonial assumptions, but it was the Spanish, who had travelled of their own volition to the port to seek work, with the threat that they were deemed to represent to French jobs, who provoked the real anger of the trade unionists. This dislike of competition from Spanish workers was echoed by the socialist councillor Le Chapelain in council meetings during 1919 and 1920. Whereas he had been outspoken about Moroccans living in Le Havre in the wake of June 1917, with the arrival of Spanish workers the target of his opprobrium shifted. [[86]](#endnote-86)

Despite the existence of hostility towards other Europeans, however, when violence again broke out between French and Moroccan workers on 21 January 1920, generalized xenophobia as a possible cause was discounted by the police, who adduced, specifically, anti-Moroccan prejudice. The commissaire stressed the local dynamics once more at play, by tracing the root of the tensions to the incident of 1917 and ‘latent hatred’ which he claimed had persisted between French and Moroccan dockworkers since then.[[87]](#endnote-87) This new violence, which erupted after a French worker was shot by a Moroccan, left ten Moroccans seriously injured, one dead and three with life-threatening injuries; the French docker, meanwhile, survived but was in a critical condition for a month and seven or eight other French workers were injured.[[88]](#endnote-88) In response to the violence, Meyer, now mayor, published a communiqué calling for calm:

They must not forget that the Algerian workers employed by the port fought by their sides in the trenches and that they mixed their blood with that of Frenchmen on the fields of battle. Having responded like Frenchmen to the appeal from the motherland, they must be considered as our own and they have the right that our feelings towards them be ones of fraternity.

As for the Moroccans, whose ideas and customs will not be able to assimilate with ours, the government representative who is in charge of this category of workers is committed to repatriating them as soon as possible.

Let us all get back to work fraternally.[[89]](#endnote-89)

What is striking about this communiqué is the evocation of the debt owed to Algerian workers during the war, including them in a Republican vision of fraternity that excludes and even stigmatizes the Moroccans. The situation in Le Havre between 1916 and 1920 challenges any simple picture of the experience of war reifying racial dynamics; instead these dynamics are context-dependent and locally specific. Algerians, who had long been employed as dock workers, were officially differentiated from the newcomers, Moroccans, who were almost invariably the target for discrimination; but, as demonstrated by Le Chapelain’s changing position between 1917 and 1920, the perceived threat from Moroccans themselves could diminish when the city was confronted by the arrival of a new nationality (in this case, the Spanish). Similarly, in the tense atmosphere of June 1917, Belgians, who presented an economic threat, were signalled out for exclusion; Algerian dockers, viewed as integrated, were not. As David Beriss argues, the dominant tendency in France is to discriminate against foreigners on the basis of culture — although, as he concedes, cultural chauvinism is in practice much like biological racism, as cultures ‘constrain people in ways that resemble race’.[[90]](#endnote-90) This cultural chauvinism was key in Le Havre, and discrimination on the basis of cultural difference and perceived local integration was to become more marked in the 1920s when a different group, Vietnamese workers, became the focus of police and council concerns.

**Policing anti-colonial agitation, 1920–1940**

Surveillance of colonial migrants in Le Havre was motivated in part by nationwide apprehensions about the security of the empire. In the capital there was a belief that, after the ‘Wilsonian moment’ at the peace conference of 1919 had appeared to sanction the right to national self-determination, Paris had become a global centre for anti-colonial and revolutionary activity.[[91]](#endnote-91) In July 1927 the interior minister, Albert Sarraut, who had been Governor-General of Indochina in the previous decade and felt a personal interest in stopping the exportation of revolutionary ideas to Indochina, wrote confidentially to the prefect of Seine-Inférieure requesting immediate action to prevent the section of the Indochinese Mutual Association, based in Le Havre, from distributing the newspaper *Viet Nam Hon*. Sarraut warned that ‘revolutionary propaganda in Paris could have regrettable repercussions in Indochina’ and that it was suspected that ‘the most important departure point for copies of this newspaper is Le Havre’.[[92]](#endnote-92) Copies of the letter were sent immediately to the sub-prefect and the police spéciale in Le Havre. The letter identified one Dang Van Thu, brother of Dang Dinh Tho, and owner of the Restaurant intercolonial in the rue Saint Nicolas, as leader of the Indochinese Mutual Association and an instrumental figure in the distribution of the newspaper that was provoking anxiety in Paris.

Dang Van Thu, like many colonial migrants, was monitored by the CAI. Making liberal use of spies, and of informers drawn from the ethnic groups being monitored (of which Dang Dinh Tho was one), the bureaucrats of the CAI kept close watch on anti-colonial activities and urban associations. While the reach of the CAI was, in theory, national, coordinating locally with the Préfecture de Police in Paris and playing to the apprehensions of prominent national politicians about communism, immigrant criminality and foreign agitators, in reality the capital was the primary location for its activities.[[93]](#endnote-93) In provincial cities, including Le Havre and Bordeaux, surveillance was for the most part carried out by local police forces. Provincial urban police forces comprised groupings of the police spéciale, which was part of the Sûreté Générale (the Sûreté Nationale from 1934), an organization directly responsible via its director general to the Interior Ministry. Municipal police forces, in contrast, were administered locally (with the exception of a few towns including Marseille, Lyon and Strasbourg) by elected mayors and a commissaire de police who, although appointed by the Sûreté Générale and therefore subject to the French practice of regular transfers, was in the pay of the municipal council.[[94]](#endnote-94) Le Havre had one commissaire spécial during this period; though aided by inspectors attached to the police spéciale, he relied in practice on reports produced by the municipal police force, which, directed by the mayor and concerned with industrial unrest, was anxious to ensure that the workforce was kept under control. As Kitson has warned, historians should be mindful that police forces, being the responsibility of local mayors, were run differently in each town, so that conclusions about policing across France cannot be drawn from what was practised in the capital. Le Havre shows how local policing under the Third Republic, a polity traditionally represented as being characterized by strong centralization, could be shaped by one commissaire spécial’s interpretation of who constituted a danger.[[95]](#endnote-95)

The Vietnamese community in Le Havre, comprising mainly sailors and dockers, had been present since before the First World War. Resident largely around the narrow streets north of the Avant-Port, overwhelmingly from the protectorate of Annam and born between 1890 and 1905, they excited no more than a passing police interest until 1923, when the prefect of Seine-Inférieure was informed of links between the Paris-based Union Intercoloniale, formed by Nguyen Ai Quoc (the future Ho Chi Minh) and other groups of anti-colonial activists. Responding to a request by the interior minister to the prefect of Seine-Inférieure in November 1923 for information about a group of ‘Annamites’ located in the rue Estimauville, the commissaire central, Pottier, informed the prefect (who informed the minister in turn) that the location was a hotel renowned for boarding ‘Annamite sailors’. Although there were nine Annamites in residence, only Nguyen Van Tinh caused unease. He was already being monitored by the police spéciale, his links with Henri Julie, the secretary of the local maritime workers’ union and a known communist activist, having caused fears of local unrest. Le Havre had experienced crippling strikes immediately after the end of the war, and in May 1920 Henri Julie had been imprisoned for mutiny.[[96]](#endnote-96) From 1923 to 1940 what was known as the ‘Indochinese colony’ in Le Havre was scrupulously monitored by the local police, but for all the detailed reports which were sent to Paris about anti-colonial agitation and networks forged, it was anxiety about links with local troublemakers, and specifically communist groupings, which exercised the municipal police.[[97]](#endnote-97)

Although the Vietnamese population in Le Havre was small in comparison with those in Paris and Marseille (approximately a tenth of the size of that of Paris and a fifth of that of Marseille), it was viewed by the municipal police, the Sûreté Générale and the prefect of the *département* as potentially dangerous.[[98]](#endnote-98) Such fears were not confined to Paris. That Le Havre was implicated in exporting seditious literature was confirmed by the police in Bordeaux, where it was reported in 1929 that Vietnamese sailors who arrived from Le Havre were distributing the revolutionary and proscribed newspaper *La Résurrection* among their compatriots in the port.[[99]](#endnote-99) What clearly emerges, however, is a tension between what Paris viewed as the key danger — exportation of seditious material to Vietnam — and what concerned the local police: namely, criminality and urban unrest. In January 1930 the Prefect of Seine-Inférieure estimated that the Vietnamese population of Le Havre comprised approximately 200 individuals, of which only thirty were in residence permanently (the rest being sailors who stayed there in between voyages); those permanently resident in Le Havre worked the docks, ran restaurants or worked in local shops, while ‘Some of them do not carry out any work and seem to live by trafficking drugs.’[[100]](#endnote-100) In this respect, the ‘Indochinese colony’ in Le Havre was relatively homogeneous in terms of age (under 40 years old), occupation (low-grade maritime jobs) and background (originating from the protectorate of Annam). It was also distinct from the Vietnamese populations in Paris, Marseille and Bordeaux in that there was no large contingent of bilingual students. The transatlantic port of Bordeaux, for example, reported approximately 120 Vietnamese residents in 1929, 60 students and 60 sailors, with the number declining to 80 in 1932 but the proportions remaining constant.[[101]](#endnote-101) Although in Le Havre those overtly engaged in anti-colonial activity, specifically in the form of the Annamite Independence Committee, numbered only four or five, their leader, Dang Van Thu, was politically active and generated numerous reports from the commissaire spécial to the interior minister. It was reported, for example, that during January 1930 alone Dang Van Thu had travelled to Dunkirk, Lille and Paris, that he possessed a typewriter with ‘Vietnamese’ letters with which he produced tracts, and that he attempted to assist known Annamite militant separatists who had come to Le Havre to travel to Russia and America.[[102]](#endnote-102) A key feature of these reports, and an exceptional one given the rapid turnover of personnel characteristic of the French administrative system, is that they were all written by one commissaire spécial, François-JoëlChauvineau, an officer who was commended by the interior minister, Sarraut, in 1934 for the longevity and consistency of his service.[[103]](#endnote-103)

Dang Van Thu, also known as Louis and ‘Gros Louis’, excited much attention from the agents of the CAI as a potentially dangerous agitator and linchpin of the anti-colonial network of Vietnamese workers in France.[[104]](#endnote-104) Unlike the student-based Vietnamese organizations in Paris, Dang Van Thu worked primarily with working-class immigrants and, after Nguyen Ai Quoc left France, he attempted to forge cooperation between working-class immigrants from France’s colonies.[[105]](#endnote-105) He arrived in Le Havre in 1920 and worked as a cook on a steamer until 1925 when he opened ‘an Annamite restaurant’ at 5 rue St Nicolas. The ‘Restaurant intercolonial’, a name that recalled the intercolonial aspirations of Nguyen Ai Quoc, was not only a source of revenue for Dang Van Thu and a place, located in the rundown narrow streets behind the docks, to welcome passing Vietnamese sailors; he also made use of the location to disseminate anti-colonial tracts, employing, according to an anonymous police informer, his ‘authoritarian character’ to influence and politicize passing sailors.[[106]](#endnote-106) While attempts to expel him had failed due to his classification as a ‘protégé français’, he was listed on the Carnet B (the list of political enemies that the government kept in case of a national emergency) from 30 July 1927.[[107]](#endnote-107)

Dang Van Thu was monitored carefully by agents from the CAI, who noted with consternation his connections with known Paris-based activists. Agent Desiré reported, for example, that Dang Van Thu had met with the cook Vo Van Tan, who travelled to Le Havre in August 1926 to promote the newspaper *Viet Nam Hon*, and that Dang Van Thu had then also travelled to Paris.[[108]](#endnote-108) He was also a person of interest for the police of Le Havre, who, although mindful of his wider anti-colonial activities, were primarily concerned with what they perceived as the dangerous links which he was creating with other militant and revolutionary groups in Le Havre — principally with communists, but also with known pacifists and the Ligue française pour la défense des droits de l’homme et du citoyen (the liberal citizenship association established in 1898 in the wake of the Dreyfus affair).[[109]](#endnote-109) In November 1927, the commissaire central, Pottier, reported to the sub-prefect that several posters had appeared in which the local branch of the PCF called for a show of solidarity from the ‘Normandy proletariat’ against ‘the outrageous act of aggression to which Indochinese workers in the Eure area were victim’ by attending a meeting on 8 November 1927. The poster, entitled ‘Let’s break the silence’, was jointly signed by Dang Van Thu, with the parenthetical comment ‘Victim of police brutality’, and by Trouillard, the Secretary General of the local branch of the PCF.[[110]](#endnote-110) Pottier’s report of the meeting held at the Salle Franklin states that it was attended by approximately 400 people, a group which included 20 women, 150 Annamites and approximately 40 Martiniquans and Guadeloupeans.[[111]](#endnote-111) Much has been written about the sidelining of immigrant workers in communist activities during the interwar period, and the failure of the union movement in France to encourage immigrant action. Liauzu notes, for example, the dearth of immigrants among union members in Marseille, Le Havre, the Nord region and Bordeaux.[[112]](#endnote-112) However, police reports from Le Havre contradict this picture, revealing joint action and close local ties, and suggesting that the small restaurant run by Dang Van Thu offered an ideal site for cross-fertilization and collaboration among a transient population.

As early as 22 December 1926, in a detailed two-page report by Chauvineau to the director general of the Sûreté Générale, concerns were raised about how Dang Van Thu was using his restaurant to attract a diverse range of marginal groups. Exploiting its geographic location behind the docks, in a road that was little frequented and ‘difficult to access’ (making police surveillance highly problematic), the restaurant no longer confined itself to being a centre for anti-colonial activities (visited ‘exclusively by Indochinese and some Blacks who constantly talked in their own respective idioms’) but was now being hired out for 300 francs a night to communist agitators.[[113]](#endnote-113) It was noted that a meeting had taken place there on the evening of 16 July 1932, with guest speakers Le Bras and Le Gagneux from the PCF and representatives of the League against Imperialism.[[114]](#endnote-114) A particular cause for alarm was the fact that the Vietnamese workers who attended were actively solicited to present their grievances at the world congress to be held in Geneva. In a much earlier report, of March 1925, the commissaire spécial had warned the director general of the Sûreté Générale of the influence that Dang Van Thu had over his fellow Vietnamese sailors; since then, his influence had spread. He took part in a strike organized by council workers on 24 January 1926, during which he was arrested, and by the end of the year the commissaire reported:

There is not one extremist demonstration organized in our town in which this militant does not play an active part. He speaks at nearly all meetings held by avant-garde groups and ensures that his compatriots attend too. We find him on every occasion when there is a chance to create disorder and carry out revolutionary activity.[[115]](#endnote-115)

The report was written in response to a request on 20 December 1926 for information about anti-colonial activity in the port, but it also provides evidence of how local priorities and limitations affected policing. Dang Van Thu was undoubtedly viewed by the commissaire as the ‘soul of the anti-colonial movement in our town’, but it was his links with the communist party and criminal elements which were given as the primary reasons for attentive monitoring. Chauvineau’s reports single out Dang Van Thu as a troublemaker whose ability to mobilize support from the local PCF exacerbated more general concerns about law and order. It is noted, for example, that it was the communists who helped him to collect and then donate the sum of 1200 francs to the banned newspaper *Viet Nam Hon*.[[116]](#endnote-116) Subsequently, Dang Van Thu continued to be at the centre of revolutionary and militant activism in the city. On 13 September 1927, along with communists, he mobilized the Association of Annamite Workers of Le Havre to protest against the arrest of a trade unionist, the metalworker Paul Lemarchand.[[117]](#endnote-117) This protest caused a backlash in the local press. In an editorial in the republican pro-colonial newspaper *Le Petit Havre*, the nexus between the Indochinese pro-independence ‘colony’ in Le Havre and communist agitation was represented as potentially destructive, with the Vietnamese being held responsible not only for creating havoc but also for spreading hatred.[[118]](#endnote-118)

The effectiveness of the police surveillance was questionable. As Chauvineau made clear, any operation was restricted by the limited number of his personnel.[[119]](#endnote-119) Between 1914 and 1940 the municipal police force comprised *c*. 300 men for all police duties, a figure that fluctuated but did not significantly change, and there was only ever one commissaire spécial based in the port.[[120]](#endnote-120) During large-scale strikes, the police of Le Havre had to rely on the support of the *gendarmerie mobile*, based in Yvetot.[[121]](#endnote-121) It is worth pointing out that such limitations in personnel were not unusual for municipalities: as Kitson notes, ‘France’s capital city had more Police officers and more equipment than all of the provincial forces combined.’[[122]](#endnote-122) The French police may have developed the practice of ‘shadowing’, with the Sûreté Généralespecializing in surveillance techniques that, as Jean-Marc Berlière remarks, ‘surprised’ German policemen during the Occupation, but the implementation of these techniques in Le Havre shows the disconnection between national policy, Parisian practice and local realities.[[123]](#endnote-123) Surveillance was hampered by linguistic difficulties, a problem which resonates throughout the local police reports. Whereas the CAI made use of informers drawn from the ethnic groups being monitored, the municipal police force of Le Havre, in contrast with that of Bordeaux which made extensive use of ‘Annamite informers’ recruited from the student population, was reliant upon its own personnel.[[124]](#endnote-124) Twice in the report of 22 December 1926, Chauvineau stresses that effective intervention was prevented by the fact that he and his officers did not speak the languages used by the Indochinese and black sailors whom they encountered.[[125]](#endnote-125) The commissaire reported that he suspected that illegal gambling was taking place in the Restaurant intercolonial but, as all players were using ‘their own national language’, it was impossible to establish facts.[[126]](#endnote-126) In February 1927 such problems were again reported, Chauvineau noting that the ethnicity of his personnel rendered undercover action impractical, for ‘assistants and inspectors cannot enter without immediately being recognized’.[[127]](#endnote-127) As such, even though the local police duly reported that the ‘Indochinese colony’ had assembled to celebrate Tet (the Vietnamese new year), the police informer could not comment on what had been said: ‘A short speech was delivered by Van Thu and there were very animated conversations the entire evening, but the officer whom I had sent there could not give me any precise indication of what had been said because all attendees were speaking in their own language.’[[128]](#endnote-128) Frustrated in their desire to penetrate the tight-knit community or to expel the *protégé français* Dang Van Thu, the police were confined to monitoring and reporting, expressing relief when, in May 1934, he finally left the port.[[129]](#endnote-129)

The shipping routes which operated out of Le Havre made it an attractive location for la Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre (LDRN) as well as for Vietnamese nationalists. Formed by the communist-leaning Lamine Senghor, Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté and Camille Sainte-Rose after the scission in the Comité de défense de la race nègre in March 1927, the LDRN under Kouyaté’s influence adopted an explicitly black nationalist agenda, and its paper, *La Race nègre*, was partly funded by the PCF.[[130]](#endnote-130) Its revolutionary aims ensured that the LDRN was actively monitored; distribution of its paper was supervised and in some places prohibited. The Sûreté Générale was alarmed by the LDRN’s role in anti-colonial agitation, especially its aim to establish links with pro-independence groups in the colonies. The police in Le Havre, however, were more sanguine than their Parisian counterparts, viewing the LDRN with considerably less suspicion than they had the Vietnamese activities. In October 1931, Chauvineau informed the sub-prefect and the Sûreté Générale that a local section of the LDRN had been constituted in Le Havre.[[131]](#endnote-131) Yet he was blasé about this development, noting that the section comprised only nine members, and that its organizing committee (the president Amadou N’Diaye, the vice president Sidi Aumard Caba, secretary Yasasni Lamine and treasurer Léon Drame) had displayed, at least until that point, no ‘extremist sentiments’. A further report of December 1931 stressed again the limited influence of the LDRN (with only about 40 members, while approximately 100 black sailors were resident in Le Havre), and conveyed Chauvineau’s longstanding belief that the aims of the LDRN in Le Havre were directly related to the economic crisis.[[132]](#endnote-132)

The Sûreté Générale was particularly concerned that African sailors based in Le Havre were transporting forbidden newspapers to Senegal. In December 1931, John Soumah, a Guinean resident in Le Havre, was investigated for smuggling by colonial authorities in Dakar when his ship, the SS Baoulé, docked there. Senegalese police believed that it was Soumah who brought copies of the periodical *La Race nègre* into Dakar and they reported that, before the materials were smuggled off the ship, the paper had been read by all the ‘native’ crew on board.[[133]](#endnote-133) Contacted by the Sûreté Générale, Chauvineau replied that Soumah ‘had never made himself known to the authorities in terms of either his political activities or his general conduct until now’.[[134]](#endnote-134) Regarding Soumah’s fellow Guinean sailor Sida Aumard Caba, a ship’s baker who was vice president of the *section havraise* of the LDRN, Chauvineau was similarly relaxed: while Caba had attended several communist and sailors’ meetings, ‘it does not seem that this native is taken by communist ideas’, being motivated primarily by concerns about the high rates of unemployment among ‘sailors of colour’. Despite Parisian fears, in January 1932 Chauvineau recommended not inscribing Caba on the Carnet B.[[135]](#endnote-135)

Time and again, local police reports emphasized the largely apolitical nature of the sailors from Senegal and other French African colonies who passed through Le Havre. For example, when the prefect was contacted by the interior minister in December 1931 and asked to prevent the transmission via ships setting sail from Le Havre of a brochure entitled ‘Programme d’action syndicale pour les ouvriers nègres’ which he claimed was being distributed to French West Africa and the Antilles by the International Mariners Clubs of Marseille, Bordeaux and Le Havre,[[136]](#endnote-136) the commissaire cursorily replied that there was no such international club based in Le Havre.[[137]](#endnote-137) Indeed, Africans (whether Sub-Saharan or North Africans) located in Le Havre did not, unlike the Vietnamese *protégés*, attract hostility from the police, the municipal authorities or the local press after the venomous public agitation against Moroccans in 1920.[[138]](#endnote-138) This is not to suggest that meetings were not monitored. They were — especially those attended by communists, such as the meeting held on 10 July 1926 in the salle Kitchener to mark the creation of the Comité de défense de la race nègre, where, it was reported, approximately 60 colonial workers along with 200 *havrais* communists (including 35 women) were present.[[139]](#endnote-139) However, police reports delineated meetings initiated by Blacks as apolitical and economic in motivation, concerned with the hardships of the economic crisis rather than dangerous anti-colonialism. In December 1934, commissaire Chauvineau informed the sub-prefect that ‘These negroes, for the large part, have been in Le Havre since the war and it does not seem that they are prepared to return to their countries of origin.’[[140]](#endnote-140) As with the mutability of otherness which became evident in 1920, when Algerians were differentiated from Moroccans, black workers were manifestly distinguished as ‘less foreign’ than the Vietnamese, their longevity of residence being used to suggest integration. This report also offers some explanation as to why the African sailors and dockers did not excite the same level of anxiety as did Vietnamese sailors. Amadou N’Diaye, president of the local section of the LDRN in Le Havre from its formation in October 1931 until the end of 1932, had returned to Dakar, and after his departure the section had ceased to exist. Revolutionary propaganda among the sailors was judged to be ‘non-existent’. More generally, the report portrayed the local black population as unthreatening:

They are generally located in the areas around Notre Dame St-Françoise and the Eure, largely where women of loose morals can be found. […] Approximately sixty blacks are registered unemployed. They live very modestly, taking their meals in their rooms or in the cheapest establishments. […] The others are at sea. In Le Havre, they meet up again with their friends […] and help out as much as their resources allow.[[141]](#endnote-141)

Chauvineau’s assessment of black sailors as apolitical and both self-contained and moderately integrated is echoed in a contemporaneous report generated by an agent working for the CAI. In 1934 the Antillean communist Julians visited Le Havre, along with Marseille and Rouen, in an attempt to politicize and recruit black workers to the Union des travailleurs nègres (UTN) founded in 1932. His trip to Le Havre was singularly unsuccessful, the CAI report noting that black workers in the port were divided between two associations according to origin: one, ‘La Famille Antillaise’, and another which combined the Senegalese, Malagasies and a few Somalis (the Archives de Seine-Maritime reveal that this was the Syndicat de Défense de la Race Nègre which had successfully protested against the hiring of English-speaking Somali sailors in February 1932).[[142]](#endnote-142) Both societies enjoyed the active patronage of Meyer, and the agent reported that they ‘must observe absolute political neutrality and keep themselves apart from workers’ struggles’. The societies were, however, encouraged to take part in events organized by the city. Postulating this effective embedding of black workers within wider civic activities as the cause, the agent concluded that not one could be motivated to join the UTN.[[143]](#endnote-143) Chauvineau’s own report had included a reference to Julians: ‘Julliano, Pierre is not known in Le Havre and we have found no evidence either of his staying or passing through our town.’[[144]](#endnote-144) Taken in conjunction, these reports also highlight the disjointed nature of the police surveillance. While the central authorities had an agent following Julians to Le Havre, the local police force had not been informed of the activist’s visit and remained completely unaware of his presence among *havrais* workers (the ignorance of the local police being such that Chauvineau’s report has the name mistyped).

Although the sailors and dockers lived in the same geographical area as the Vietnamese workers (the Eure district, which was infamous for prostitution) and are noted as interacting with other marginal groups, specifically petty criminals, they did not evoke concern.[[145]](#endnote-145) The primary focus of the municipal police was on how the Vietnamese workers, under the leadership of Dang Van Thu, were fomenting revolutionary action in an area which already had volatile dockers; and this was a focus which arose from a specific concern with urban disruption and criminality. In a report of November 1933, Chauvineau stressed the moral laxity of Dang Van Thu, who had been arrested in Paris on 22 September. It is reported that Dang Van Thu had first cohabited with a British woman, Estèle Alhian, with whom he had arrived in Le Havre in March 1920, and then, after 1925, with a Frenchwoman of ‘loose morals’, Marie Dufour, by whom he had two children.[[146]](#endnote-146) Suspecting that ‘Gros Louis’, having sold his restaurant in September 1933, lived by means of drug trafficking, Chauvineau rehearses the man’s criminal record: arrested and charged on numerous occasions, for theft (29 July 1921, a charge that led to an acquittal), for the distribution of the prohibited newspaper *Viet Nam Hon* and attacking a magistrate (9 January 1928, when he was fined 500 francs and imprisoned for a month) and for trafficking drugs (22 April 1930, when he was again acquitted).[[147]](#endnote-147) Dang Van Thu’s final departure for Paris, with his common-law wife and two children on 9 May 1934, was reported with great relief by Chauvineau to the sub-prefect: a disruptive criminal who had been cohabiting with a Frenchwoman was no longer Le Havre’s problem.[[148]](#endnote-148)

The fizzling-out of the Dang Van Thu episode is emblematic of the often chaotic relationship between national and local priorities, and is at odds with the notion of a highly centralized operation which, in its readiness to round up and expel colonial subjects, has been deemed by Stovall to ‘set a pattern for the expulsion of the racial Other that would resurface, far more tragically, with the deportation of foreign Jews to the death camps of the 1940s’.[[149]](#endnote-149) As such, this local case study nuances those accounts which argue that the centrally led policing of colonial migrants and foreigners was a ‘prelude’ to exclusionary practices adopted after the end of the Third Republic and under Vichy France.[[150]](#endnote-150) This is not to deny what Elisa Camiscioli has identified as the ‘relatively wide currency of biologism during the Third Republic’, something which she sees as ‘critical to understanding the transition from liberal democracy to the Vichy state’; it should serve, rather, as a reminder of David Arnold’s caveat that ‘the role of the police was never restricted to that laid down by law-makers’.[[151]](#endnote-151) In the case of Le Havre, priorities could be, and were, overlooked.

**Conclusion**

In exploring how authorities responded to the population of migrants in the urban space of Le Havre between 1914 and 1940, this article has sought to expose how national policies and agendas were variously enacted and neglected according to specific local priorities. As David Arnold demonstrated in his study of policing in colonial Madras, there is a clear disparity between the formal structure of a policing institution and its operation in practice, with police action frequently being adapted to the reality of a particular locale.[[152]](#endnote-152) In contrast with the detailed surveillance carried by informers of the CAI in Paris and in Marseille, a somewhat chaotic picture emerges of policing in Le Havre.

The political situation during the First World War, which saw Le Havre under military command, with significant Belgian and British military presences, allowed the municipal council to introduce practices of segregation previously adopted only outside continental France and to pursue, despite its strong secular credentials, a policy of encouraging religious observance among Moroccan colonial workers.[[153]](#endnote-153) After the First World War, for all the creation in Paris of a system of surveillance that made extensive use of informers drawn from the ethnic groups being monitored, surveillance in this provincial city remained patchy, sometimes being limited by a lack of personnel and by language difficulties. Whereas the police in Bordeaux recruited bilingual Vietnamese students to act as informants, the working-class Vietnamese migrants passing through Le Havre remained impervious to infiltration, a tight-knit group unaffected by the regional rivalries which plagued the communities in Paris and Bordeaux.[[154]](#endnote-154) The tenor of local action was contingent on the ways in which individual officials interpreted and contextualized ‘threatening’ activities, focusing on those which seemed to pose an immediate threat to law and order in the city. This is most noticeable in the different levels of surveillance accorded to the LDRN and the Vietnamese community in the interwar period: the Vietnamese, subject to preconceived ideas about social instability and drug trafficking, and judged in terms of the links forged by ‘Gros Louis’ and his associates with militant union groups, were actively pursued as an imminent threat, while militants from Sub-Saharan Africa were monitored but largely left alone, despite pressures from the interior minister and the CAI.[[155]](#endnote-155)

What also emerges clearly from the archives is the mutability of concepts of ‘otherness’ and their links with perceptions of economic threat, with the citizens of Le Havre targeting other Europeans when such migrants were seen as more dangerous economic competitors than Algerian dockworkers. For the police, the attitude to migrants was similarly prosaic but more complex and pragmatic, marked by a willingness to sacrifice national agendas in the interests of immediate local concerns and by the tendency of individual officers to classify peoples as ‘dangerous’ within the administratively constructed categories of criminality, race and nationality. In either case, the categorization of what constituted a ‘suspicious other’ could shift radically as external push factors changed.

1. S. de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life* (Harmondsworth, 1962), 202. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. H. Clout, ‘Popular geographies in a French port city: the experience of Le Havre Society of Commercial Geography, 1884–1948’, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 124 (2008), 53–77 (54). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. A. Lebrun, ‘L’œuvre coloniale au Havre’, introduction to *Colonies dans notre vie nationale de demain: conférence de M. Albert Lebrun* (Le Havre, 1917), 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. A. Londres, *Marseille, porte du Sud* (Paris, 1995 [1927]), 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. D. Lejeune, *Les Sociétés de géographie en France et l’expansion coloniale au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1993), 164. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. J.F. Laffey, ‘Municipal imperialism in nineteenth century France’, *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 1 (1974), 81–114; and J.F. Laffey, ‘Municipal imperialism in France: the Lyon Chamber of Commerce, 1900–1914’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 119 (1975), 8–23. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. In this respect, the notion of the ‘transnational’ is used as a ‘research perspective’, a means of elucidating global entanglements that challenge a Paris-centric vision of the French nation-state. See P. Clavin, ‘Defining transnationalism’, *Contemporary European History*, 14 (2005), 421–39 (436). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. P. Young and P. Whalen, ‘The local in French history: changing paradigms and possibilities’, in P. Whalen and P. Young (eds), *Place and Locality in Modern France* (London, 2014), xiii–xl (xx). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Municipal records note only one Algerian officially registered in the port on 22 November 1912; Archives Départementales de la Seine Maritime (subsequently ADSM), 4 M 867. S. Pattieu, ‘Souteneurs noirs à Marseille, 1918–21: contribution à l’histoire de la minorité noire en France’, *Annales HSS*, 2009, no. 6, 1361–86 (1363–66). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. This socio-economic profile is noticeable also in the transatlantic port of Liverpool at the beginning of the twentieth century; J. Jenkinson, ‘The 1919 riots’, in Panikos Panay (ed.), *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, revised edn (London, 1996 [1993]), 92–111 (92). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. A.L. Stoler and F. Cooper, ‘Between metropole and colony: rethinking a research agenda’, in F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* (Berkeley, 1997), 1–56 (4). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. J.A. Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: the urban grounds of anti-imperialism and feminism in interwar Paris* (Lincoln, 2010), 215. For the problems with the Paris-centric approach, see Boittin’s chapter ‘“Among them complicit?” Life and politics in France’s black communities’, in E. Rosenhaft and R. Aitken (eds), *Africa in Europe: studies in transnational practice in the long twentieth century* (Liverpool, 2013), 55–75 (60). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. See, for example, C. Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: religion and political identity in Brittany* (Princeton, 1998); and S. Gerson, *The Pride of Place: local memories and political culture in nineteenth-century France* (Ithaca, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. R. Aldrich, ‘Colonialism and nation building in modern France’, in S. Berger and A. Miller (eds), *Nationalizing Empires* (Budapest, 2015), 135–94 (180). See S. Bourkata, *Bordeaux: Une économie et société coloniales au début du XXe siècle* (Bordeaux, 2004); M. Lewis, ‘The strangeness of foreigners: policing migration and nation in interwar Marseille’, *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 20 (2002), 65–96; C. Malon, *Le Havre colonial de 1880 à 1960* (Caen, 2006); R.-C. Grondin, *L’Empire en province: Culture et expérience coloniales en Limousin (1830–1939)*(Toulouse, 2011); and E. Godin, ‘Greater France and the provinces: representations of the empire and colonial interests in the Rennes region 1880–1905’, *French History*, 21 (2007), 65–84. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. See, for example, D. Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest: liberal imperialism and the surveillance of anti-colonialists in Europe, 1905–1945* (Oxford, 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. G. Mann, ‘Locating colonial histories: between France and West Africa’, *American Historical Review*, 110 (2005), 409–34 (410). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. In her study of interwar Paris, Boittin uses the verb ‘to colonize’ in order to stress the agency of the peoples who form the subject of her study and to demonstrate how they occupied the city space of Paris; Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*, *op. cit*., xv. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. The CAI became the Service de Liaison avec les originaires des territoires français d’outre-mer (SLOTFOM) in 1946. M. Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: interwar Paris and the seeds of third world nationalism* (Cambridge, 2015), 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Even in Claude Liauzu’s otherwise thorough 1982 study, which espoused a global approach to anti-imperialism among non-Europeans, the distortion is apparent; C. Liauzu, *Aux Origines des Tiers-Mondismes: Colonisés et anticolonistes en France 1919–1939* (Paris, 1982). See also Boittin’s monograph, which addresses black colonial migrants, and P. Morlat’s *La Répression colonial au Vietnam (1908–1940)* (Paris, 1990), which deals with migrants from Indochina. Goebel’s monograph (*op. cit.*)explicitly aims to overcome this previous fragmentation while also incorporating Latin American revolutionaries into the historical narrative. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. J. Barzman, *Dockers, Metallos, Menagères: Mouvements sociaux et cultures militantes au Havre 1912–1923* (Rouen, 1997), 1–39. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Malon, *op. cit*., 536. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. ADSM, 2 Z 55, interior minister to the prefect of Seine-Inférieure, 4 July 1927. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the author. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. D. Gordon, ‘The back door of the nation state: expulsions of foreigners and continuity in twentieth-century France’, *Past & Present*, 186 (2005), 201–32; C. Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: the origins of modern immigration control between the wars* (Ithaca, 2006); S. Kitson, *Police and Politics in Marseille, 1936–1945* (Leiden, 2014); Boittin, *op. cit.*; Brückenhaus, *op. cit.*; Goebel, *op. cit*.; and Lewis, *op. cit*. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. N. Pairaudeau, *Mobile Citizens: French Indians in Indochina, 1858­­­­­­–1954* (Copenhagen, 2016), 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. E. Saada, ‘Citoyens et sujets de l’Empire français: les usages du droit dans la situation coloniale’, *Genèses*, 53 (2003), 4–24.  [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. J.-M. Berlière, *Le Monde des polices en France, XIXe–XXe siècles* (Brussels, 1996), 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. On the League of Nations’ fight against international crime after the First World War, and the role played by police officials in port cities, see P. Knepper, *International Crime in the Twentieth Century: the League of Nations era* (Basingstoke, 2011), 9–32. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. T. Stovall, ‘Colour-blind France? Colonial workers during the First World War’, *Race & Class*, 35 (1993), 35–55 (41). [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. B. Nogoro and L. Weil, *La main d’œuvre étrangère et coloniale pendant la guerre* (Paris, 1926), 25. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. T. Stovall, ‘National identity and shifting imperial frontiers: whiteness and the exclusion of colonial labor after World War I’, *Representations*, 84 (2003), 52–72 (58). [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, 127–28. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*, *op. cit*., xxv. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, Contre-Amiral Didelot to the sub-prefect, 1 July 1917; C. Malon, ‘Travailleurs étrangers et coloniaux au Havre (1880–1962)’, in J. Barzman and E. Saunier (eds), *Migrants dans une ville portuaire: Le Havre (XVIe–XXIe siècle)* (Le Havre, 2005), 44–58 (47). [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Barzman, *op. cit.*, 96. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Centre Historique des Archives, Société Historique de l’Armée de la Terre, 6 N 149: Rouvier, 7 April 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Archives municipales du Havre (subsequently AMH), Ville du Havre, 588 14803, Le Général du Division, Chef de la Mission D.B. de la Zone Britannique to the mayor of Le Havre, 16 January 1919. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. T. Stovall, ‘The color line behind the lines: racial violence during the Great War’, *American Historical Review*, 19 (1998) 737–69 (755). It is worth noting that the incident took place on the night of 18 June and not, as Stovall states, 17 June. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Malon, *Le Havre*, *op. cit.*, 436. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Malon, ‘Travailleurs étrangers’, *op. cit.*, 44 and 46. ADSM 2 Z 55, the sub-prefect of Le Havre to the prefect of Seine-Inférieure, 27 November 1923, 9 February 1927, 23 January 1930 and 29 November 1934. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. ADSM, 1 M 557, the prefect of Seine-Inférieure to the interior minister, 30 January 1930. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, 161. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, Hallouin, ‘Rapport sur le fonctionnement du bureau annexe des Affaires Indigènes du Havre pendant le 2e semestre 1917’, 5 February 1918, 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. E. James, ‘Algériens, Marocains et Tunisiens de 1914 à 1920’, in *Migrants dans une ville portuaire*, *op. cit.*, 83–94 (85). [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, commisaire spécial to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 10 May 1917; *Le Petit Havre*, 17 May 1917, 1; and *Le Petit Havre*, 1 July 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Stovall, ‘The color line’, *op. cit.*, 750. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. J. Barzman, ‘“La gravité du fléchissement qui s’était produit au Havre”: Grèves et oppositions à la guerre en 1917–1918’, *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 179 (1995), 115–34 (115). Maintaining civilian morale in order to safeguard the *union sacrée* was vital to the French war effort. This involved not only press censorship but monitoring within *départements* (under the coordination of prefects) of signs of social unrest and seditious behaviour as well as censorship of letters sent by members of the armed forces and by colonial workers. J.-J. Becker, *The Great War and the French People*, trans. by A. Pomerans (Oxford, 1983), 3–5 and 323–24. The novel *Un rude hiver* (Paris, 1939), by *havrais* author R. Queneau, offers a compelling fictional representation of the tensions apparent in Le Havre by the winter of 1916–17 between French residents, colonial workers, British army personnel and the military authorities. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, the Chef du Bureau de Centralisation des renseignements to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 23 February 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. D. Maghraoui, ‘The “Grande Guerre Sainte”: Moroccan colonial troops and workers in the First World War’, *Journal of North African Studies*, 9 (2004), 1–21. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, commissaire spécial to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 24 December 1916. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, the chef du bureau de centralisation des renseignements to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 23 February 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, Hallouin, *op. cit.*, 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, Hallouin, *op. cit.*, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. R.S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: colonial subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore, 2008), 271–74. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. *Le Petit Havre*, 7 April. 1917, 1. AMH, Le Chapelain, ‘Procès-verbaux des séances du Conseil municipal et arrêtés d’intérêt général et de Police’, Année 1917 (Le Havre, 1917), 26 June 1917, 708–17 (712). On 1 July 1917, Didelot estimated that there were 1,300 Moroccans in Le Havre, with 742 employed by Les Tréfileries; ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, Contre-Amiral Didelot to the sub-prefect of Le Havre (marked ‘secret’), 1 July 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Contre-Amiral Didelot to the sub-prefect of Le Havre (marked ‘secret’), 1 July 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, commissaire de Police de Graville Sainte-Honorine to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 11 January 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. ADSM 2 Z 25, commissaire central to the sub-prefect, 19 June 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. ADSM 2 Z 25, commissaire spécial to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 19 June 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. *ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, Hallouin, *op. cit.*, 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. *ibid.*, 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Stovall, ‘The color line’, *op. cit.*, 755–56. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, ‘Projet de création d’un Bureau des Affaires indigènes au Havre’, April 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Jenkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 92; ADSM, 2 Z 22, commissaire spécial Italiani to the sub-prefect 19 April 1916. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. ADSM, 2 Z 22, commissaire central to the sub-prefect, 28 June 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. For a discussion of notions of race intersecting with other socially generated concepts such as gender, see M. Rowe, ‘Sex, “race” and riot in Liverpool, 1919’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 19 (2000), 53–70 (65). [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. ‘Une bagarre’, *Le Havre Éclair*, 1, 20 June 1917; ‘Une bagarre’, *Le Petit Havre*, 19 June 1917, 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. AMH, Jules Jennequin, ‘Séance du 26 juin 1917: 23. Incidents du 18 juin. Mesures à prendre pour en éviter le retour. Observations’, Procès-verbaux des séances du Conseil municipal et arrêtés d’intérêt général et de Police, 709. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. *ibid.*, 715. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. ADSM 2 Z 25, Ernest Legoffre to the mayor of Le Havre, 27 February 1920. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. ADSM, 2 Z 25, Pierre Bataille, ‘Affaire Enquête sur les Marocains habitant 14 rue Regnard’, 21 July 1920. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. *ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. J. Abu-Lughod, Rabat, Urban Apartheid in Morocco (Princeton, 1981), 138–42; and A. Raffin, ‘Imperial nationhood and its impact on colonial cities: issues of intergroup peace and conflict in Pondicherry and Vietnam’, in D.E. Davis and N.L. de Duren (eds), *Cities and Sovereignty: Identity Politics and Urban Spaces* (Bloomington, 2011), 28–58 (38–42). [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, Hallouin, *op. cit.*, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, ‘Rapport sur le fonctionnement des Services d’Assistance et de Surveillance des Indigènes’, recorded 379 Algerian workers in Le Havre between 20 August and 20 September 1918. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, anonymous letters to Didelot, 20 July 1917 and 21 August 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231: commissaire spécial Italiani to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 4 August 1918. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Maghraoui, *op. cit.*, 16; and Stovall, ‘The color line’, *op. cit.*, 759. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. AMH, Le Chapelain, *op. cit.*, 710. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, commissaire central to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 1 July 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. Barzman, *Dockers, op. cit.*, 221–40. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. See for example, *Le Petit Havre*, 22 Jan 1920, 1; and Queneau’s short story in which the narrator recalls ‘Arabs being thrown out of windows in 1917’: ‘Le café de la France’, *Contes et propos* (Paris, 1981), 149. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, Contre-Amiral Didelot to commissaire Italiani, 3 August 1918. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. ADSM, 11 R 230, 231, commissaire Italiani to Contre-Amiral Didelot, 5 August 1918. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. AMH, Le Chapelain, *op. cit.*, 712–13; and Barzman, *Dockers, op. cit.*, 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. AMH, Le Chapelain, Séance publique du 28 janvier 1920, 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. ADSM, 2 Z 25, ‘Au sujet d’une bagarre’, commissaire central to the sub-prefect, 21 January 1920. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. *ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Anon., ‘Chronique locale’, *Le Petit Havre*, 24 January 1920, 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. D. Beriss, ‘Culture-as-race or culture-as-culture: Caribbean ethnicity and the ambiguity of cultural identity in French society’, *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 18 (2000), 18–47 (40). [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. Liauzu, *op. cit.*, 102; K. A. Keller, ‘Political surveillance and colonial urban rule: “suspicious” politics and urban space in Dakar, Senegal, 1918–1939’, *French Historical Studies*, 35 (2012), 727–49, *passim*. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. D.G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885–1925* (Berkeley, 1971), *passim*; ADSM, 2 Z 55, interior minister to the prefect of Seine-Inférieure, 4 July 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. Morlat, *op. cit.*, 189, n.113; Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. J.-M. Berlière, ‘Police et République: une acculturation réciproque’, in J.-M. Berlière and D. Peschanski (eds), *La Police française (1930–1950): Entre bouleversements et permanences* (Paris, 2000) 17–31 (21). [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. Kitson, *op. cit.*, xviii. See also J.-M. Berlière, ‘Ordre et sécurité: les nouveaux corps de police de la troisième République’, *Vingtième Siècle, revue d’histoire*, 39 (1993), 23–37; *La Police française (1930–1950)*, *op. cit.*;and Lewis, *op. cit.* [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. Barzman, *Dockers*, *op cit.*, 348. [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. ADSM 1 M 557, prefect of Seine-Inférieure to the interior minister, 30 January 1930. [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. Figures from Liauzu, *op. cit.*, 101. [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. Commissaire central to the prefect of Gironde, 2 April 1929; Archives Départementales de la Gironde (subsequently ADG), 1 M 572. [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. ADSM 1 M 557, prefect of Seine-Inférieure to the interior minister, 30 January 1930. [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. ADG, 1 M 572, commissaire central to the prefect of Gironde, 12 July 1929, and commissaire spécial to the director of the Sûreté Générale, 1 July 1932. For a brief discussion of the Vietnamese populations of Paris and Marseille, see E.J. Peters, ‘Resistance, rivalries, and restaurants: Vietnamese workers in interwar France’, *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 2 (2007), 109–43 (110–12). [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. *ibid.* [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. *Journal officiel de la République française. Lois et décrets*, 66, 166: 17 July 1934, 7215. [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. Agent Désiré report, 5 August 1926, Archives nationales d’Outre-Mer (subsequently CAOM), 3 SLOTFOM 1, dossier 56. Van Thu’s reputation as an agitator is also detailed in the Sûreté report, 16 January 1929, CAOM, 3 SLOTFOM 23. [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. Peters, *op. cit.*,123. [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. ADSM 2 Z 49, unsigned report, 16 Apr. 1927; and CAOM, Sûreté report, 7 December 1928, 3 SLOTFOM 1, dossier 327. [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. ADSM, 2 Z 49, Notice individuelle, 30 July 1927; letter from the Interior Ministry, 7 September 1926. [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. Agent Désiré report, 5 August 1926; CAOM, 3 SLOTFOM 1, dossier 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the prefect of Seine-Inférieure, 13 September 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire central to the sub-prefect, 7 November 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire central to the sub-prefect, 9 November 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. Liauzu, *op. cit.*, 191. [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the director of the Sûreté Générale in Paris, 22 December 1926. [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. ADSM, 2 Z 49, No. 3.970: Ligue française contre l’Oppression et l’Impérialisme, Commissariat spécial du Havre, 16 July 1932. [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. ADSM, 2 Z 55, the commissaire spécial to the director of the Sûreté Générale in Paris, 22 December 1926. [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. *ibid*.; and CAOM, Agent Désiré report, 5 August 1926, 3 SLOTFOM 1, dossier 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the prefect of Seine-Inférieure, 13 September 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. P. Albin, ‘Indochinois de France’, *Le Petit Havre*, 17 October 1927, 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. ADSM, 2 Z 55, Commissaire spécial Chauvineau to the sub-prefect, 10 November 1931. [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. G. Weulersse, *Le port du Havre* (Paris, 1921); and C. Malon, *Occupation, épuration, reconstruction: Le monde de l’entreprise au Havre (1940–1950)* (Mont-Saint-Aigan, 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. Barzman, *Dockers*, *op. cit.*, 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. Kitson, *op. cit.*, xviii. [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. J.-M. Berlière, ‘A Republican political police? Political policing in France under the Third Republic, 1875–1940’, in M. Mazower (ed.), *The Policing of Politics in the Twentieth Century: historical perspectives* (Oxford, 1997), 27–56 (41). [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. ADG, 1 M 572, commissaire central to the prefect of Gironde, 5 March 1927, 23 March 1927, 3 August 1917, 24 October 1927, 28 November 1927and 4 January 1928; the commissaire spécial to the prefect, 19 February 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the director of the Sûreté Générale in Paris, 22 December 1926. [↑](#endnote-ref-125)
126. *ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-126)
127. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the director of the Sûreté Générale in Paris, 9 February 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
128. *ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-128)
129. ADSM, 2 Z 49, Commissaire spécial Chauvineau to sub-prefect, 9 May 1934. [↑](#endnote-ref-129)
130. D. Murphy, ‘Defending the “Negro Race”: Lamine Senghor and black internationalism in interwar France’, *French Cultural Studies*, 24 (2013), 161–73 (169); and G. Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: negritude and colonial humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, 2005), 180–81. [↑](#endnote-ref-130)
131. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the sub-prefect, 22 October 1931. [↑](#endnote-ref-131)
132. ADSM, 1M 557, the prefect of Seine-Inférieure to the interior minister, 26 December 1931. [↑](#endnote-ref-132)
133. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the sub-prefect, 18 December 1931; CAOM, Archives du Gouvernement Général d’Afrique Occidental Française, Fonds Modern, 21 G 44. [↑](#endnote-ref-133)
134. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the sub-prefect, 18 December 1931. [↑](#endnote-ref-134)
135. *ibid*., and ADSM, 2 Z 55, Notice individuelle: CABA Sidi Aumard. [↑](#endnote-ref-135)
136. ADSM 2 Z 55, interior minister to the prefect of Seine-Inférieure, 14 December 1931. [↑](#endnote-ref-136)
137. ADSM 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the prefect, 23 December 1931. [↑](#endnote-ref-137)
138. AMH, Conseil Municipal du Havre, Séance publique du 28 janvier 1920, 5–12. [↑](#endnote-ref-138)
139. ADSM 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the prefect, 27 July 1926. [↑](#endnote-ref-139)
140. ADSM 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial Chauvineau to the sub-prefect, 8 December 1934. [↑](#endnote-ref-140)
141. *ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-141)
142. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial Chauvineau to the sub-prefect, 22 February 1932. [↑](#endnote-ref-142)
143. CAOM, 3 SLOTFOM 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-143)
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145. *ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-145)
146. ADSM, 2 Z 49, Notice individuelle: Dan Van Thu, 30 July 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-146)
147. ADSM, 2 Z 49, commissaire spécial Chauvineau to the sub-prefect, 24 November 1933. [↑](#endnote-ref-147)
148. ADSM, 2 Z 49, commissaire spécial Chauvineau to the sub-prefect, 9 May 1934. [↑](#endnote-ref-148)
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150. Gordon, *op. cit.*, 202. [↑](#endnote-ref-150)
151. E. Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: immigration, intimacy, and embodiment in the early twentieth century* (Durham, 2009), 77; and D. Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras 1859–1947* (Oxford, 1986), 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-151)
152. Arnold, *ibid*., *passim*. [↑](#endnote-ref-152)
153. AMH, Le Chapelain, ‘Séance du 26 juin 1917: 23. Incidents du 18 juin. Mesures à prendre pour en éviter le retour. Observations’, Procès-verbaux des séances du Conseil municipal et arrêtés d’intérêt général et de Police, 710. [↑](#endnote-ref-153)
154. On the rifts between *tonkinois* and *cochinchinois* workers in Paris, see Goebel, *op. cit.*, 72; the refusal of the *cochinchinois* students to have anything to do with Annamite sailors in Bordeaux is noted by the commissaire spécial in a letter to the prefect; ADG 1 M 572, 25 April 1929. [↑](#endnote-ref-154)
155. ADSM, 2 Z 55, commissaire spécial to the sub-prefect, 18 December 1931. [↑](#endnote-ref-155)