

broadcast

Friday, June 27 and July 4, 2003

in the documentary slot

contre-courant

hosted by Stéphane Paoli



un parcours algérien

a film by

Hervé Bourges

Alain Ferrari

produced by

Agnès Vicariot

Jean-François Lepetit

a

FLACH FILM

France 2

ENTV (Algerian Television)

co-production

in partnership with

France 5

head of the France 2 documentary department

Yves Jeanneau

running time

2x90 minutes

year of production

2003

subsequent broadcast on France 5

interview with Hervé Bourges and Jean-François Lepetit



- *How did this project come about?*

- **Jean-François Lepetit:** This may surprise you: *Un Parcours algérien* was born in Acapulco in the year 2000.

Hervé Bourges had been invited by Daniel Toscan du Plantier as part of the Unifrance delegation to an event designed to promote French cinema in Latin America and in which I played an active part.

I had known Hervé Bourges for a long time, firstly as a staunch supporter of French cinema. His book, *De Mémoire d'éléphant*, had just been published and he offered me a copy. Everyone knows Hervé Bourges as the chairman of TV channels, the head of the CSA and a media figure. But, in his book, I found another Bourges, an actor in and witness to part of our collective history...

On the flight home, I devoured his book, notably the chapters on Algeria.

On landing in Paris, I suggested producing a documentary on the theme of his "Algerian experience". He accepted in principle but didn't really begin to work on the project until one year after he left the CSA. And we produced the film in 2002.

- *Why did you focus on Algeria?*

- **Hervé Bourges:** Circumstances have made me a privileged witness to half a century of Algerian history. Like the rest of my generation, I was marked by this war that never openly stated its name. As soon as I graduated from the Higher School of Journalism in Lille, I joined *Témoignage Chrétien*, a weekly whose stand against colonial wars had been permanent since the end of World War Two. Out of loyalty to the values of those who founded it as a resistance paper during the War, the newspaper couldn't bear the idea of seeing the French army as an army "of occupation", even to hold onto a colonial empire that had been conquered long before. The commitment of André Mandouze, the Barrats and Georges Suffert had already been resolute in relation to Morocco. The "Algerian troubles" and, notably, the condemnation of torture were immediately at the heart of our editorial concerns.

- *But you didn't simply cover them as a reporter...*

- **Hervé Bourges:** I was called up, like all the young French men in my generation, and I did my military service in Algeria. This allowed me to discover the reality of Algerian society prior Independence and to perceive the full scope of the incipient conflict. And so, for thirty months, from January 1958 to the summer of 1960, I was a private in a light aviation unit in the army, charged with operational support. My superiors immediately entrusted me with organizational tasks: the army theatre and the training of young people in Aïn Arnat, the town neighbouring the camp. I saw the contrast between conviction and behaviour, for the worse but also for the better. Any judgement of this period and the army's role during it must avoid all over-simplification. This is why I have always strived to avoid caricature. Perhaps I haven't always been exhaustive, as a perfect historian should be, but I have related what I saw, the good and bad aspects, on both sides.

- *On your return, you would discover another aspect of the events...*

- **Hervé Bourges:** On my return, I discovered the State's action. Summoned to the office of Edmond Michelet, the Minister for Justice, to deal with problems linked to Algeria, I found myself at the heart of a complex power struggle in which the leading lights of Gaullism, Michel Debré and Pierre Mesmer, stuck to a hard line in relation to the evolution of General de Gaulle himself who wanted to bring everyone towards negotiated solution. There, I discovered a whole range of remarkable and brave people: Edmond Michelet himself, Simone Veil, Germaine Tillion, Gisèle Halimi, but also among the Algerian prisoners, Bachir Boumaza, for instance, and the five historic leaders held on the Ile d'Aix before being transferred to Turquant: Boudiaf, Aït Ahmed, Bitat, Khider and, above all, Ben Bella. As their "jailer", I would meet them regularly and acted as their official go-between with the French government in the person of the Minister for Justice... It was an incredible opportunity



to be able to observe events amidst the key actors, analysing their moves and helping to bring about a peaceful solution.

- *Would you still have that opportunity following the Evian agreements? What role would you then play?*

- **Hervé Bourges:** In the summer of 1961, Michel Debré managed to oust Edmond Michelet from his government and I returned to *Témoignage Chrétien* as chief editor. And so I was a journalist throughout this period marked in Paris by the actions of the Chief of Police, Maurice Papon, and, in particular, by the bloody repression of the Algerian demonstrations. Subsequently, the Evian agreements led to a period of total confusion in Algeria, with the last-ditch actions of the OAS and the revelation of the deep-seated divergences within the heart of the Algerian nationalist movement. This confusion led to the gradual emergence of a better-organized centralizing force, the FLN, of which Ben Bella took control, relying on the military force represented by the ALN headed by Colonel Boumediene. As soon as he was in power in Algiers, Ben Bella asked me to work with his government on the process of institutional and political construction that lay ahead. It was a little crazy of me to get involved in this but, at the same time, it was thrilling... And that's how I continued to be a direct and privileged witness to the first years of the new Algerian republic.

- *What issues did you handle in particular?*

- **Hervé Bourges:** I have always attempted to match my actions with my convictions and experience: I handled the training of young people and the preparation of the first generation of Algerian journalists by bringing leading French professionals to Algiers for training courses... As much as possible, I was one of those who tried to keep up the bridge

between the two shores of the Mediterranean, despite the violence of the separation. And so I was nominated director for youth and popular education in the office of a certain Abdelaziz Bouteflika and also became an assistant to the Minister for Communications, Bachir Boumaza, who would later be the Chairman of the Algerian Senate... But the turn taken by events, notably after the coup of June 19, 1965, when Boumediene ousted Ben Bella from office, caused me to leave Algeria in 1967 to return to France.

- *An easy return?*

- **Hervé Bourges:** Of course not! But that's another story. In any case, I've continued to follow events on the other side of the Mediterranean with close attention, even if I returned only rarely until Presidents Chirac and Bouteflika asked me to chair "*Djazair, Une Année de l'Algérie en France*", more than 2,000 cultural events throughout France that allow us to pick up the trail of a conversation that has been interrupted for far too long! I'm particularly happy to be working in this way to strengthen the bonds between France and Algeria, something that I have never ceased doing since that time!

Editorial

Alain Ferrari



I was eager to make *Un parcours algérien* and I loved making it for three main reasons.

Firstly, Algeria has held – and continues to hold – an important place in my personal life. I have always felt – and still feel - a great deal of admiration and respect for the people of Algeria, confronted for centuries with the most tragic situations imaginable. In the 20th century, they showed their courage, not only during their struggle for independence but also during the bloody 1990s. The people are still standing, despite the problems of living day to day, despite the massacres. Each new trip to Algeria confirms the admiration and respect that I feel.

The shooting of *Un parcours algérien* served to strengthen that feeling.

Secondly, the atypical nature of Hervé Bourges's relationship with Algeria. Cinema and television have above all shown us French people who opted for one extreme or another: the "suitcase carriers" or the OAS. Hervé Bourges never adopted such radical positions. But his daily work, inspired by generosity and tolerance, allowed him, with the support of others, notably that of Christian groups, to maintain contacts between both shores of the Mediterranean, maintaining them at all costs both at the height of the "unnamed war" and during the troubled birth of the Algerian nation and state.

Finally, this project obliged me to imagine an original form: two stories knitted together, one subjective – Hervé Bourges's account of his own experience – and the other more global and objective – the story of the period (1958-1965) or rather of certain precise aspects of the period as told by Hervé Bourges and by direct witnesses or actors of the events. And so I went to meet the former students of the youth centre in Aïn Arnat – a centre founded by Hervé Bourges near Sétif in 1958. An unforgettable encounter. Since Hervé Bourges wasn't present, these men were able to speak openly and with the warmth of memory of the influence on their individual lives of this "odd soldier". At the same time, they allowed me to touch the harsh reality of the colonial experience.

Two intermingled accounts, then, that show the ties that have been maintained between the two peoples against all odds. May *Un parcours algérien* shatter the over-simplification that endures to this day: in this story of noise and fury, it wasn't a matter of good guys against bad guys, or even of good guys against good guys, bad guys against bad guys. On each side, there were men of goodwill. And I have tried to pay tribute to them with this film, without subscribing to the culture of forgetfulness and with an urgent desire for conciliation, thanks to my "guide", Hervé Bourges.

synopsis

Episode 1: "Birth of a Nation"



Human histories never coincide with stereotypes or ulterior simplifications. Each of the characters in this story has his or her own experience, logic and coherence. The documentary is born, like the events that it relates, from the interaction of these strong individual personalities that Hervé Bourges has met, accompanied or taken a stand against.

First episode: 1956-1962

Everything begins with *Témoignage Chrétien*, one of the courageous newspapers that carried out their task to serve the truth, even during wartime: the positions adopted by Denise and Robert Barrat, André Mandouze, Mauriac... Hervé Bourges writes his first articles for the paper. Then comes his experience in the field in Algeria: on the base at Aïn Arnat, Private Bourges is in charge of training the young men from the village neighbouring the base. Discovery of the situation of the people, of the reality of colonial Algeria, of the growing influence of the FLN too... The third chapter of this experience of the Algerian War offers a different vision of it: in the office of Edmond Michelet, Minister for Justice, Hervé Bourges follows Algerian affairs, handling the files of the men held in French prisons. From the most obscure prisoners awaiting execution, to the most famous figures, with whom General de Gaulle's government negotiates, the five historic leaders held at the Santé prison in Paris, then on the Ile d'Aix and finally in the Château de Turquant... This third chapter show us the reverse side of the war maps, seen from within the State.

Interviewees episode 1



André MANDOUZE

Chief editor – *Témoignage Chrétien*

Reda MALEK

Chief editor – underground *El Moudjahid*

Nelly FORGET

Assistant to Germaine TILLION
for the Social Centres

Gisèle HALIMI

Attorney

Jacques DUQUESNE

Writer - Journalist

Commandant Jean POUGET

Assistant to Colonel Crespin (Aïn Arnat)

Miloud BEGAG

Coordinator at the Sétif social centre

Lakhdar BOUZIDI

Salah ABDELLAOUI

Allaoua BOUZIDI

Mustapha FELLAHI

Allaoua TABET

Former members of the Aïn Arnat youth centre

Meriem Belmihoub ZERDANI

FLN militant

Georges SCRIVAT

Prison warder in Algiers

Pierre MESSMER

Simone VEIL

Maître Mourad OUSSEDIK

Attorney

Maître VERGES

Attorney

Maître Paul BOUCHET

Attorney

Bachir BOUMAZA

Official with the French Federation of the FLN

Ahmed BEN BELLA

Ali HAROUN

Official with the French Federation of the FLN

Bernard STASI

Parliamentary private secretary
to the minister Maurice Herzog

synopsis

Episode 2: "The trials of power"



The second film is a fresco that relates the tumultuous birth of the Algerian State: everything needs to be organized: what place remains for the population of European origin? How can the Evian agreements be implemented? What fate awaits the Harkis who fought with the French army? The new Algeria is born in pain and the wrench of exodus, the unleashing of terrorism, civil disorganisation... For the nationalists now in power, after the parenthesis of the "temporary administration" installed at Le Rocher Noir, it's a matter of applying the contradictory ideals that have guided them. The Algerian population discovers the tensions between its leaders and the country splits into antagonistic areas of influence. The rivalry is harsh between Ben Khedda's GPRA, this historical leaders of the FLN and Boumediene's ALN. Hervé Bourges witnesses the gradual take-over of power by Ben Bella who summons him to his side where he will accompany the first years of the new Algerian state, in the front row to observe the developments of the first measures adopted... This allows him to be more than a mere historian today, but an eyewitness.

Interviewees episode 2



Roger ROTH

Deputy and Mayor of Philippeville
Vice-Chairman of the Algerian constituent assembly

Nouredine NAIT MAZI

Former director of *El Moudjaid*

Reda MALEK

Negotiator in Evian

Claude CHEYSSON

Director of the Franco-Algerian body managing the
resources of the Saharan subsoil

Pierre MESSMER

Minister for the Armies

Ali HAROUN

Member of the Federal Committee for the French
Foundation of the FLN

Commandant Jean POUGET

Bachir BOUMAZA

Minister under Ben Bella and Boumediene

Lakhdar BOUZIDI

Bernard STASI

Monseigneur Henri TEISSIER

Current Archbishop of Algiers

Georges MORIN

Teacher in Constantine following Independence

René VAUTIER

Filmmaker

Mohamed YAZID

GPRA Minister for Information
Negotiator in Evian

Maître Mourad OUSSEDIK

Attorney

Amar AZZOUZ

Head of a training college

Hervé Bourges



DIPLOMAS

Graduate of the Higher School for Journalism in Lille
Doctor in Political Science (University of Lille II)

CAREER

1956-1967

Chief editor of *Témoignage Chrétien*
Representative to Edmond Michelet, Minister for Justice, Garde des Sceaux
Technical adviser to the President of the Algerian Republic
Director for Youth and Popular Education
Technical adviser to the Algerian Ministers for Justice and Information

1967-1976

Senior lecturer at the University of Paris II
Director of the Third World Department of the French Press and Information Sciences Institute (Paris II)
Founder and director of the International Higher School for Journalism in Yaoundé (Cameroon)

1976-1980

Director of the Higher School for Journalism in Lille

1980-1981

Spokesman for Mr Amadou Mahtar M'bow, general director of UNESCO and director of the public information office of UNESCO

1982-1983

Managing director of Radio France Internationale

1983-1987

Chairman and managing director of TF1

1987-1988

Chairman of Canal Plus Afrique

1988-1990

Vice-chairman and managing director of Radio Monte-Carlo

Chairman and managing director of Radio Nostalgie

1989-1990

Chairman and managing director of SOFIRAD

1990-1993

Chairman and managing director of the national public television channels France 2 and France 3

1994

Ambassador, permanent French delegate to UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation); named plenipotentiary minister by decree on October 20, 1994

From January 24, 1995, to January 23, 2001 (non-renewable six-year term)

Chairman of the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel
Since November 2000

Chairman of the Union Internationale de la Presse francophone (UPF)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Chairman of the Higher School for Journalism in Lille

PUBLICATIONS

L'Algérie à l'épreuve du pouvoir (preface by Jacques Berque) – Grasset 1967

La révolte étudiante - Le Seuil 1968

Décoloniser l'information - Cerna 1978

Les cinquante Afriques (2 volumes, in collaboration with C.Wauthier) - Le Seuil 1979

Le village planétaire (in collaboration with Jules Gritti) – N.E.A. 1986

Une chaîne sur les bras - Le Seuil 1987

Un amour de télévision (in collaboration with Pascal Josèphe) – Plon 1989

La télévision du public - Flammarion 1993

De mémoire d'éléphant - Grasset 2000

HONOURS

Prix "Pierre Mille", 1982

Military Valour Cross, 1960

Chevalier of the Order of the Légion d'Honneur, 1986

Officer of the Order of the Légion d'Honneur, 1998



Alain Ferrari

Former assistant to Robert Bresson (*Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*), a film historian, screenwriter and director, Alain Ferrari has made numerous documentaries for television: portraits of performers, artists, writers and philosophers (*Maria Callas, Gérard Philipe, Tito Gobbi, Daniel Barenboïm, Jean-Claude Casadesus, Les 1001 visions de Dali, André Malraux, Max Jacob, Pierre Benoît, Hannah Arendt, etc...*), as well historical and even politically committed films on the great struggles of the 20th century (*Les Aventures de la liberté* and *Un jour dans la mort de Sarajevo* with Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Des hommes libres* with Daniel Rondeau, *Le Siècle des intellectuels* with Michel Winock, *L'année de toutes les nations*, with Jean Daniel, *Tout condamné à mort aura la tête tranchée*, etc..).

He has also made fiction works for television, notably *La Gardienne, Deux filles sur un banc, Je suis à Rio, ne m'attends pas pour dîner, La Barbe-Bleue, L'Homme qui ne voulait pas tuer, Parlez après le signal sonore...*

For the big screen, he has co-directed *Bosna !* with Bernard-Henri Lévy and has written and directed *Milice, film noir*, a documentary feature on the dark years of the German Occupation and the persistence of a certain French fascism.

He has published *La Gloire de Pagnol* with the Institut Lumière/Actes Sud. For the same publisher, he is currently working on a book on French screenwriters and a biography of Henri Jeanson.

Christian Bosseno has written about him (in "200 téléastes français" published by Ciném'Action) :
"He has chosen television to launch and develop a personal body of work in both the documentary and fiction fields. His documentaries are always intelligently devised and constructed like works of fiction. His fiction works occasionally refer to everyday reality, without conforming to the strict trend of image

writing and modern naturalism. For Alain Ferrari, the imagination and attention of fiction remain a vital factor."

credits



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