12 November 2012

Algeria and the Intellectuals

St. Michel Bridge over the Seine River
Paris, France
Contemporary France and the Algerian War, 1954-1962

• 1958 governmental crisis: collapse of parliamentary Fourth Republic; De Gaulle takes power; constitution of Fifth Republic provides for a strong executive (absent in the first four French republican constitutions)

• 1962 Algerian independence: Evian Accords allow “European” Algerians (so-called pieds noirs [“black feet”]) to chose between becoming Algerian nationals or remaining in the country as “foreign”

• over 700,000 move to France as do many Moslem Algerians
• eventual total: over 2,000,000; France’s population today = 61,000,000

• use of torture and internment by French military

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Republic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1792-1799</td>
<td>First Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848-1851</td>
<td>Second Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-1940</td>
<td>Third Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-1958</td>
<td>Fourth Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958- now</td>
<td>Fifth Republic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Costs of the “Events in Algeria”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Troops Maintaining Order and Establishing Security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>early 1955</td>
<td>83,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>450,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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[according to a French report to the United Nations, over 250,000 “Moslems from Algeria” fought with the French forces]

(18% of national budget)

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**Casualties of “the events in Algeria” 1954-1962**

- Algerian nationalists: 150,000 or more
- French military dead: 18,000
- Wounded: 65,000
- *harkis* [Algerians]: 30,000 deaths
  - fighting with French army

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**Tracking the *fellagha* along the Transalgerian [railroad linking Algiers to Casablanca]**

*Paris Match, March 31, 1956.*
Population of Algeria, 1954
9,000,000 “French Moslems”
1,100,000 “colons” (European descent —French, Italian, Maltese)
50,000 Jewish

According to a French government report (1955)
2,000 government employees in Algeria; 8 were Moslem
15% of Moslem children attended school
European Algerians’ average income was 28 times more than Moslem Algerians’
It is about time that the Resistance fighters had their own organ of expression…To be sure, the truth is appearing, even alongside the official French lies… Still, spreading the truth about the War of Independence prolongs our military successes and will consolidate unity. … our goal is to liberate ourselves of colonialist restraints in order to create democracy and equality for all Algerians, regardless of race or religion. …

Editorial to the first issue of *El Moudjahid* (1956).

FLN – “National Liberation Front”
founded by Ben Bella in 1954 (in Cairo)
Poujadisme

UDCA = Union for the Defence of Shopkeepers and Artisans (founded in 1953 to coordinate tax protests)

1954 called for new Estates General

opposed: income tax; urbanization; Americanization; immigrants; parliamentary compromise

1956 53 UDCA representatives elected to National Assembly (including Jean-Marie Le Pen)

"Big Wall Street syndicates found incredibly rich oil deposits in the Sahara, but instead of exploiting the discovery, they capped the wells and turned the Algerians against us... All this is a great diabolic scheme to dismember France. Already the Saar is gone, and soon the Italians will want Corsica...As for those who are against us, I need only say: let them go back to Jerusalem. We'll even be glad to pay their way."

Celebration of Algerian Women, Algiers, May 18, 1958.
From Fourth Republic to Fifth Republic in France

May 13, 1958—formation of “Committee of Public Safety” in Algiers; takes over government buildings in Algeria and Corsica; elects General Massu as “President”

May 19, 1958—De Gaulle says he is willing to enter government, but not under current constitution

June 1, 1958—French National Assembly elects De Gaulle head of government, give him special powers for six months until new constitution can be written

Inflation under the Fourth Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Exchange Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 1945</td>
<td>119.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1948</td>
<td>263.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 1949</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 1957</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 1958</td>
<td>493.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 1960</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10,000 franc bill, overstamped to show it is now worth only 100 “new” francs (Jan. 1960)
Fifth Republic = Fourth Republic + De Gaulle

The disarray of the state has inevitably alienated France’s people and brought trouble for her army. For twelve years, the regime of party politics has shown itself too weak to deal with the difficulties it faces, and has led to national dislocation and the loss of independence. Formerly, the country in its wisdom trusted me to lead it to salvation [salut]…. Today, in the face of grave new challenges, I want the country to know that I am again ready to assume the powers of the Republic.


Yes, my dear old country, we are again together in the face of a grave challenge. By virtue of the mandate that the people have given me, and of the national legitimacy that I have incarnated for twenty years, I ask all of you, ladies and gentlemen, to support me, no matter what happens.

The end of French Algeria?

June 4, 1958  De Gaulle tells French Algerians, “je vous ai compris” (I have understood you)

Jan.-Feb. 1960 “Week of the barricades” fighting in favor of Algérie française (French Algeria)

Jan. 8., 1961 Referendum in France; 75% support Algerian “self determination”

April 22, 1961 putsch of the Generals in Algiers; its repression by De Gaulle leads to founding of OAS (Secret Army Organization), which targets supporters of Algerian independence

Oct. 17, 1961  after Paris police imposes curfew on “French Moslems from Algeria” peaceful protest parade brutally repressed by police (hundreds killed; bodies dumped in river)

March 18, 1962 Evian Accords grant Algerian independence;

May-Dec. 1962 “Exodus” of over 700,000 pieds noirs from Algeria
General Jacques Massu, 1908-2002

1930    graduated from St. Cyr
1930s   served in Morocco, Chad
1940    joined De Gaulle’s FFL
1945    fought in Indochina
1956    in Egypt during Suez Crisis
1957    commanded French forces in Battle of Algiers
May 1958 head of “Committee of Public Safety” to defend
“French Algeria” against traitors
--accepts De Gaulle
Jan. 1960 says army still has real control; should encourage
para-military resistance to French leaving Algeria
--stripped of position in Algeria
1966    promoted; put in charge of French forces in West Germany
Torture, Terrorism, and Human Rights’ Abuses in Algeria

“psychological warfare” to convert FLN fighters to French cause

“pacify” civilians by frightening them (arbitrary arrest; rape; etc.)

suspected “terrorists” subjected to electroshock
“water treatment”
cigarette burns

justified by reference to:

rules of warfare (which don’t apply)

Cold War threat

France as a defender of democracy in World War II
Torture in Algeria

My glasses had long since fallen off. My near-sightedness reinforced still more strongly the impression of unreality, of nightmare…

Suddenly, one of them pulled me up. He was beside himself, this was going on too long. “Listen, you scum! You’re finished! You’re going to talk! Everybody talks here!” We fought the war in Indochina, that was enough to know your type. But you know what? this is the Gestapo here! You’ve heard of the Gestapo?”… your whore of a Republic, we’ll blow it up, too! You’re going to talk, I tell you!”

On the table was a piece of board. He picked it up and used it to beat me.

Henri Alleg, The Question (published in France in 1958 by editions de Minuit [Midnight Editions]).
Two new devices for political organization and rule over foreign peoples were discovered during the first decades of imperialism. One was race as a principle of the body politic, and the other was bureaucracy as a principle of foreign domination. … The strong emphasis of totalitarian propaganda on the "scientific" nature of its assertions can be compared to certain advertising techniques which also address themselves to masses.

Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)
Algeria and the Intellectuals

The French are attached to the land of Algeria by roots that are too old and too hardy for anyone to think they can be pulled up. … The only future that is acceptable is one in which France… will render justice without discrimination (in all directions) for all the communities of Algeria… If in Algeria, the French and Arab people unify their differences, the future will have a sense for the French, the Arabs, and the entire world. The men of my family were poor and without hatred. They never oppressed anyone. Three-quarters of the French in Algeria are like them, and ready to admit the necessity of a more free and just order.

--Albert Camus, Algerian Chronicles

Come, Comrades, it would be as well to change our ways… We must leave our dreams behind… Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of all their own streets, in all the corners of the globe…Come then, the European game has finally ended; we must find something different. We today can do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe. …

--Franz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth (1961).

Fanon (1925-1961): born in Martinique, served in French army during World War Two. Trained in Lyon as a psychiatrist, went to work in Algerian hospital in 1954.
Algeria and the Intellectuals

Jean-Paul Sartre, 1905-1980
1943, Being and Nothingness—we are all like the café waiter (bad faith)
1945, founds Les Temps modernes (Modern Times magazine)
“Portrait of the Anti-Semite” appears in Dec. 1945 issue; anti-semitism isn’t an idea, it’s a passion; anti-semite abandons responsibility for his actions (bad faith)
1960 “Manifesto of the 121” (intellectuals against Algerian War)
1964 refuses Nobel Prize for literature
1968 supports student uprising in Paris

Simone De Beauvoir, 1908-1986
1949, The Second Sex
1954, The Mandarins