7 April 2008
The Algerian War
Introduction

Decolonization changed Europe, as much as it did the former colonies; in no case was this more true than with French Algeria.

Delacroix, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (1834)

- Introduction
- French Algeria, 1830-1945
- Beginning of war
- Terror and torture
- 1958 crisis and founding of Fifth Republic
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. But this does not give them the right, in my mind, to cut off the roots of Arab culture and life. … 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… Today, as before, my only ambition is to contribute to the definition of this future. 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.

--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.
Costs of the “Events in Algeria”

French troops “maintaining order and establishing security” in Algeria
early 1955 83,000
1956 450,000

(18% of national budget)

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]
1830-1850s French military conquest of “Algeria”
1848 Algeria divided into three “departments”
1870 Algerian Jews granted full citizenship
1871 “regime of exception”
Algeria and Orientalism: Cultural Representations and Economic Realities

1946-1954
24.4% of French imports were from the colonies
37.6% of French exports were to the colonies
### Population of Algeria, 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“French Moslems”</td>
<td>9,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Colon” (European descent)</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sétif Massacre

May 8, 1945  Parade to celebrate German surrender leads to clashes between paraders with banner “down with fascism and colonialism” and local police
May 9-10  attacks on local “European” residents
May 11-20  police reprisals (official death toll: 1,020; other estimates as high as 40,000)
Founding of FLN, 1954

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)
Costs of the “Events in Algeria”

French troops “maintaining order and establishing security” in Algeria
early 1955  83,000
1956  450,000

(18% of national budget)

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]
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]).
French in Algeria
1830 French military forces claim Algiers
1848 French territories in North Africa redefined as three departments; all residents are “French” but they are not citizens
1870 Algerian Jews (male) made French citizens
1945 (May 8-10) Sétif Massacre
1946 “local” populations in all French colonies made “French union citizens”
1954 “Bloody All Saints” marks beginning of the Algerian Revolution (“events in Algeria”)
1958 full French citizenship for all Algerians
1962 Evian Accords: ceasefire and Algerian independence
1999 French Chamber of Deputies and Senate passes law recognizing “the events in Algeria” as a war
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

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. In the past, 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.

The end of French Algeria?

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

Jan. 24-Feb. 2, 1960 “Week of the barricades” in favour of Algérie française

Jan. 8., 1961 Referendum in France; 75% in support of 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

March 18,1962 Evian Accords grant Algerian independence; European residents given three years in which to decide whether to take Algerian nationality or remain as “foreign nationals”

May-Dec. 1962 “Exodus” of over 700,000 pieds noirs from Algeria

Algerian War: 1958 Crisis and founding of Fifth Republic