

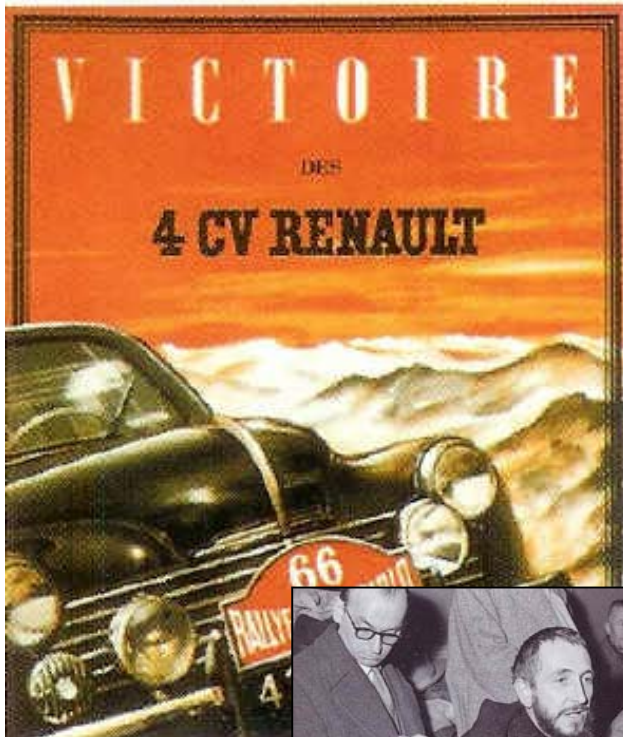
17 November 2008

# “Events” in Algeria and the Fourth Republic

Algiers, Algeria

boulevard Che Guevara (former boulevard de la République)

photo credit: Meriemly-Flickr



Renault Victory!



abbé Pierre in 1955



TGV (high speed train), 1990s-2000s



Vespa scooter advertising poster, 1955.

# Spectacle and Myth of Empire in the Fourth Republic



“I am at the barber’s, and a copy of *Paris Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a uniform is saluting... I see very well what it signifies: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any color discrimination, serve faithfully under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro...”

Roland Barthes, “Myth Today” *Mythologies*.

## THE *RIVA-BELLA* SINKS

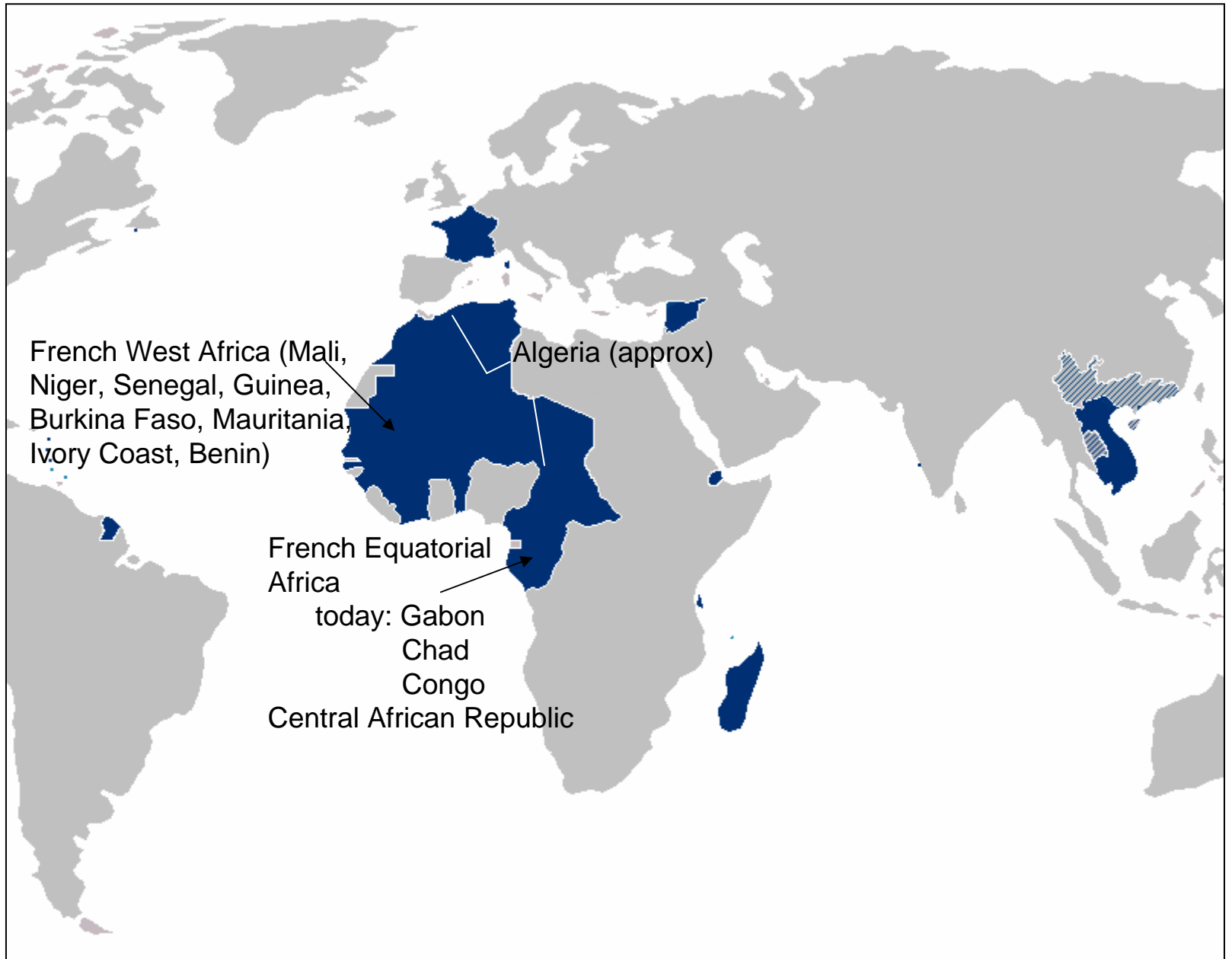
Investigators hunt for the cause and relive by photo the ten minutes of horror

## THE TRAGEDY AT LE MANS

***Paris Match***, 25 June-2 July 1955

little Diouf has come from Ouagadougou [Burkina Vaso] with his friends, children of the troops from French West Africa, to open the the fantastic spectacle that the French Army will perform at the Sports Palace this week

# French Empire in 1945 (*la plus grande France* = "greater France")



# Challenges to French Legitimacy in “Indochina,” 1940-1954



soldier of the French Foreign Legion in military cemetery in Hanoi after ceasefire declared (July 1954); on the tombstone “here lies Vancembrock, dead on the field of honor, 22 April 1954”  
photo from French Min. of Defense, ECPAD


Vichy government ruled with support of Japan

1945 brief period of direct Japanese rule

September 2, 1945—Ho Chi Minh and his supporters (Viet Minh) declare independence on basis that “all men are created equal” and “have inalienable right” to “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness”;

1948—France creates “autonomous” Vietnamese State with capital in Saigon (southern Vietnam)

March-May 1954 Dien Bien Phu (10% of French troops in Vietnam killed); French offensive and surrender

A satellite-style map of the Mediterranean region, showing the coastlines and terrain of France, Spain, Italy, and North Africa. The map is oriented with North at the top. A white text box is overlaid on the upper right portion of the map, containing population data for Algeria in 1954.

### Population of Algeria, 1954

9,000,000 “French Moslems”

1,100,000 “*colons*” (European descent  
—French, Italian, Maltese)

50,000 Jewish

- 1830-1850s French military conquest of “Algeria”
- 1848 Algeria divided into three “departments”
- 1870 Algerian Jews granted full citizenship
- 1897 large scale anti-semitic riots
- 1946 “local” populations in all colonies made citizens of the “French Union”
- 1954 beginning of war
- 1958 all Algerians granted full citizenship

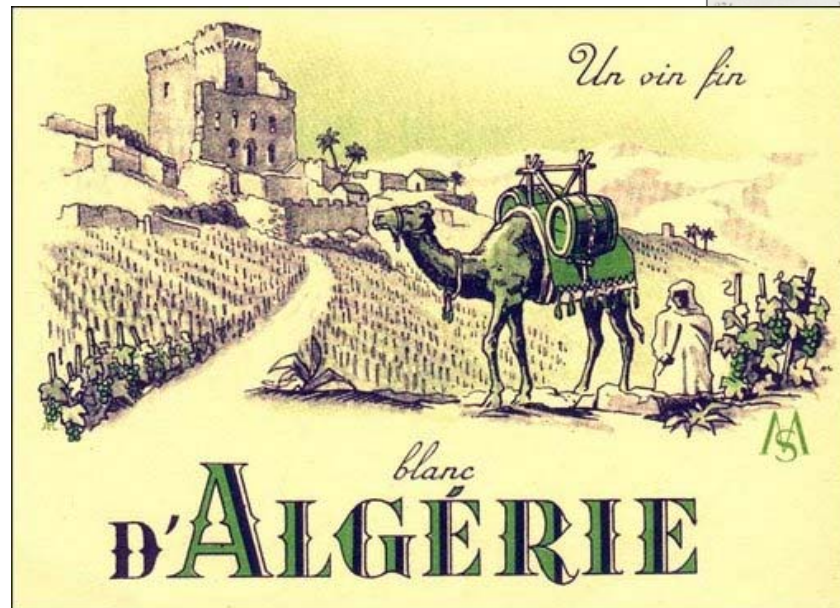
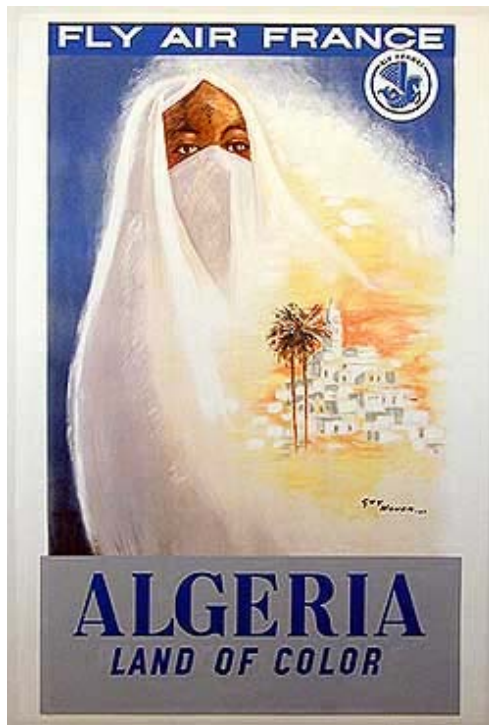
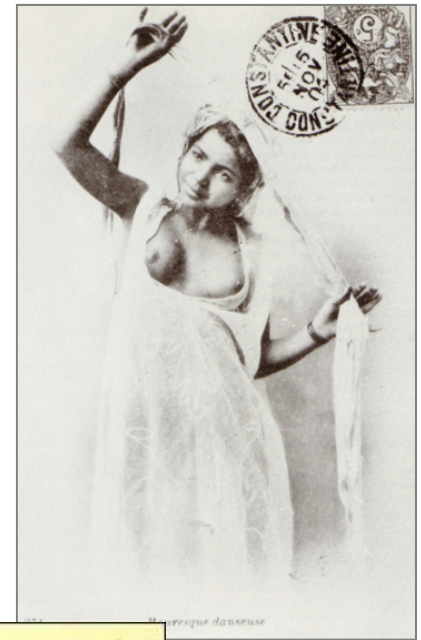


# Algeria and Orientalism: Cultural Representations and Economic Realities

1946-1954

24.4% of French imports were from the colonies

37.6% of French exports were to the colonies

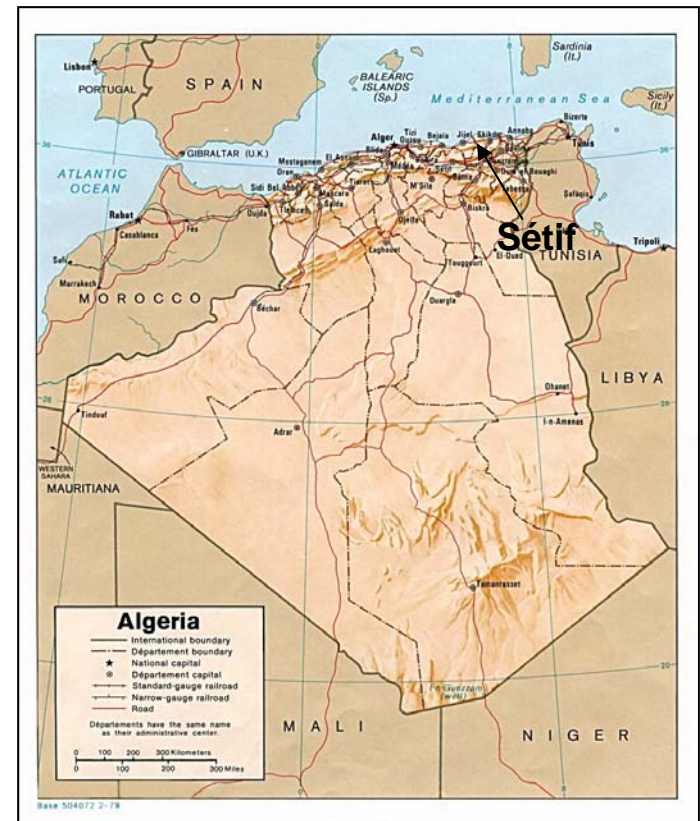


# Sétif Massacre

May 8, 1945 Parade to celebrate German surrender leads to clashes between those carrying “down with fascism and colonialism” banner 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)



# 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]

# 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)



Ahmed Ben Bella  
(1987)

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# 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

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.

Charles de Gaulle, 15 May 1958.



# 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”

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

