

History B357-Spang

# Modern France: Society, Culture, *Politics*

19 November 2008

## 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

1792-1799	First Republic
1848-1851	Second Republic
1875-1940	Third Republic
1946-1958	Fourth Republic
1958- now	Fifth Republic

# Costs of the “Events in Algeria”

## French troops “maintaining order and establishing security” in Algeria

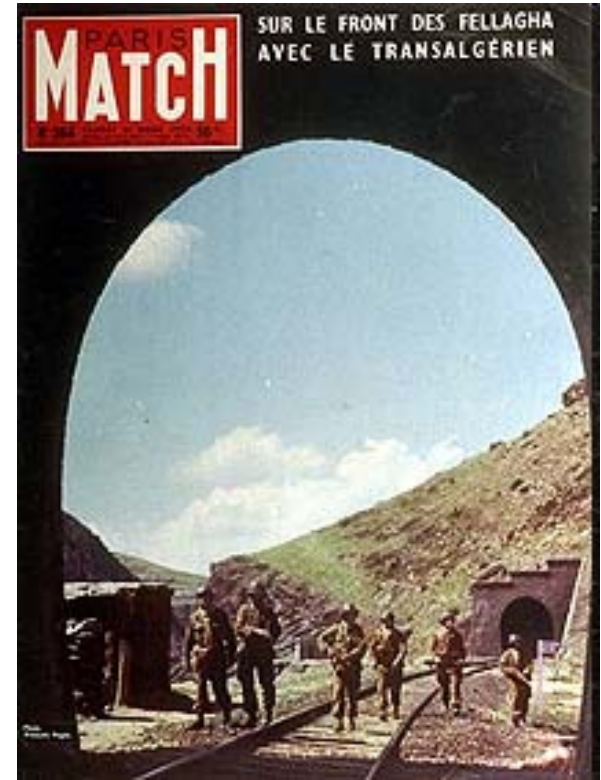
early 1955 83,000

1956 450,000

[according to a French report to the United Nations, over 250,000 “Moslems from Algeria” fought with the French forces]

(18% of national budget)

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



Paris Match, March 31, 1956.


## 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]

A satellite-style map of the Mediterranean region, showing the coastlines of France, Italy, and Algeria. The land is depicted in shades of green and brown, while the sea is dark blue. The map is centered on the Mediterranean Sea, with the French coast to the north, the Italian peninsula to the east, and the Algerian coast to the south.

## Population of Algeria, 1954

9,000,000	“French Moslems”
1,100,000	“ <i>colons</i> ” (European descent —French, Italian, Maltese)
50,000	Jewish

### According to a French government report (1955)

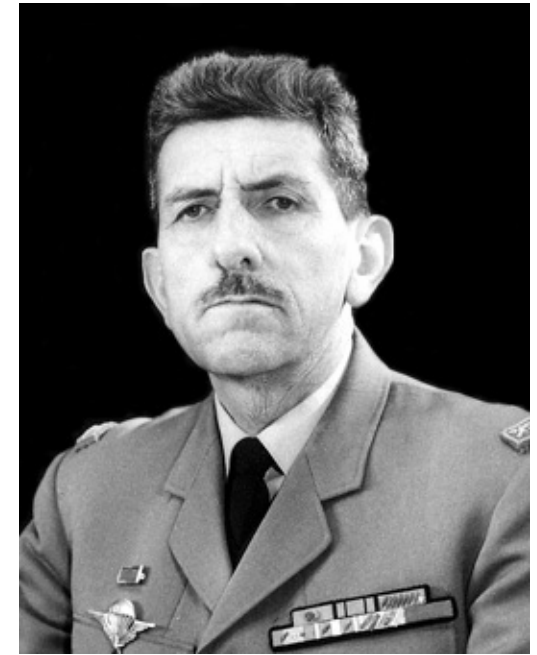
2,000 government employees in Algeria; 8 were Moslem

15% of Moslem children attended school

European Algerians' average income was 28 times more than Moslem Algerians'



Celebration of Algerian Women,  
Algiers, May 18, 1958.



Gen. Jacques Massu, 1908-2002  
1930—graduated from St. Cyr  
1930s—served in Morocco, Chad  
1941—joined De Gaulle's FFL  
1945—fought in Indochina  
1956—in Egypt during Suez Crisis  
1957—commanded French forces  
in Battle of Algiers

# 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 constition can be written

## Inflation under the Fourth Republic

\$1.00 US

Dec. 1945 119.11 French francs

Oct. 1948 263.52

Sep. 1949 350

Aug. 1957 420 Oct. 1958—5<sup>th</sup> Republic

Dec. 1958 493.71

Jan. 1960 4.93



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.

Charles de Gaulle, 15 May 1958.

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.

De Gaulle, January 1960.



# 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



“You heard nothing and  
you understood nothing”—OAS

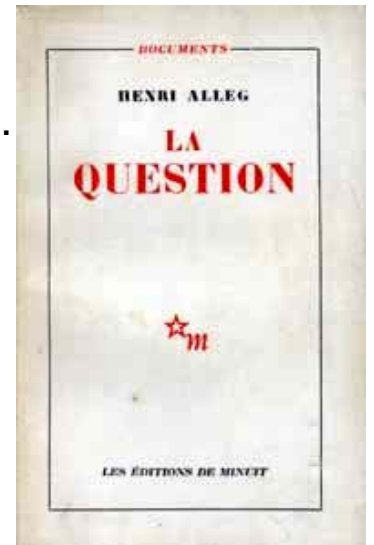
## Torture in Algeria



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]).



## Brutality: Exported from World-War-Two Europe or Original to Imperialism?

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)



statues of French generals, removed from buildings in Algeria and being packed to take to France, summer 1962

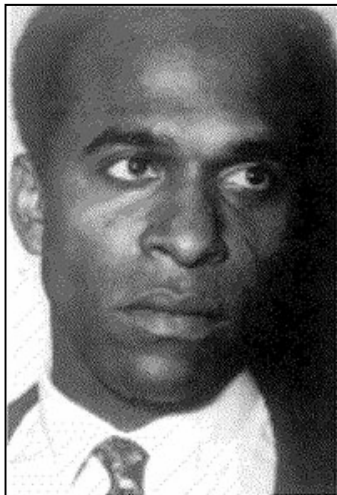
# Algeria and the Intellectuals

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*



Camus (1913-1960): born in Algeria, worked on Resistance newspaper *Le Combat*, won 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature



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*



De Beauvoir and Sartre with Che Guevara in Cuba, 1960