

History B357-Spang
Modern France:

Culture and Identity in Contemporary France

HLM,
Boulogne-Billancourt



Building Contemporary France

HLM *habitations à loyer modéré* =state-subsidized low-rent housing

1956-1975, approx. 100,000 new apartments/year
(at the time, less than half of these new constructions had toilets or bath/shower facilities)

built on the outskirts of existing cities; city centers
were left largely untouched

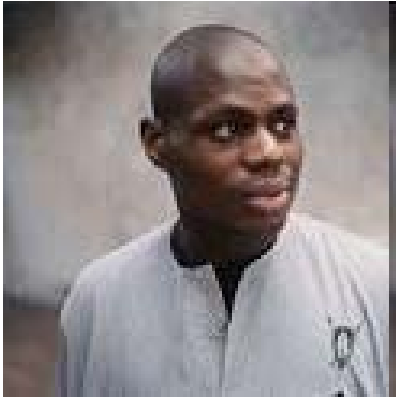
2007: 4.3 million households in HLMs
(1.5 million on the waiting list)

--constitute close to half of all rental properties



Le Corbusier
Cité Radieuse, Marseilles, 1945-1952

The Banlieues—not your mother’s “suburbs”



Kery James, French rapper
(Alix Mathurin, born in Haiti)

“The Banlieusards” (2008)

We’re not condemned to failure, that’s what the fighters sing
Banlieusard and proud of it, I wrote the song of the fighters—

those who don’t do what they’re supposed to

who don’t say what people want them to

Because life is a fight for the big and the small

If you don’t know this, it’s because you’re a bum

Listen to this, get up, and march. ...

Look at me, I am black and proud of it

I twist Moliere’s language, I master French literature

because France colonized my ancestors but my spirit is free...

...

Why us in the ghetto, them in the ENA*

Us behind bars, them in the senate?...

Arise children of the fatherland, the day of glory has arrived...

To arms citizens; form your battalions. March, march... Rouget de Lisle, “The Marseillaise” (1792)

* ENA = Ecole nationale d’Administration (one of the elite “grandes écoles”—admits 120 students/year)

Universalism without diversity: the general will and the will of all



“Lawn permitted, ball games forbidden”
(sign in a public park in Tours, Indre-et-Loire)

How can you govern a country that has 246
different kinds of cheese?

De Gaulle, cited in *The General's Words* (1962).

France's “immigration problem”

- socio-economic exclusion
- cultural difference

I have always had a certain idea of France...

Charles de Gaulle, first sentence of his *War Memoires*



Universal Rights and Abstract Individuals

The adversaries of the Jewish people attack me. ...

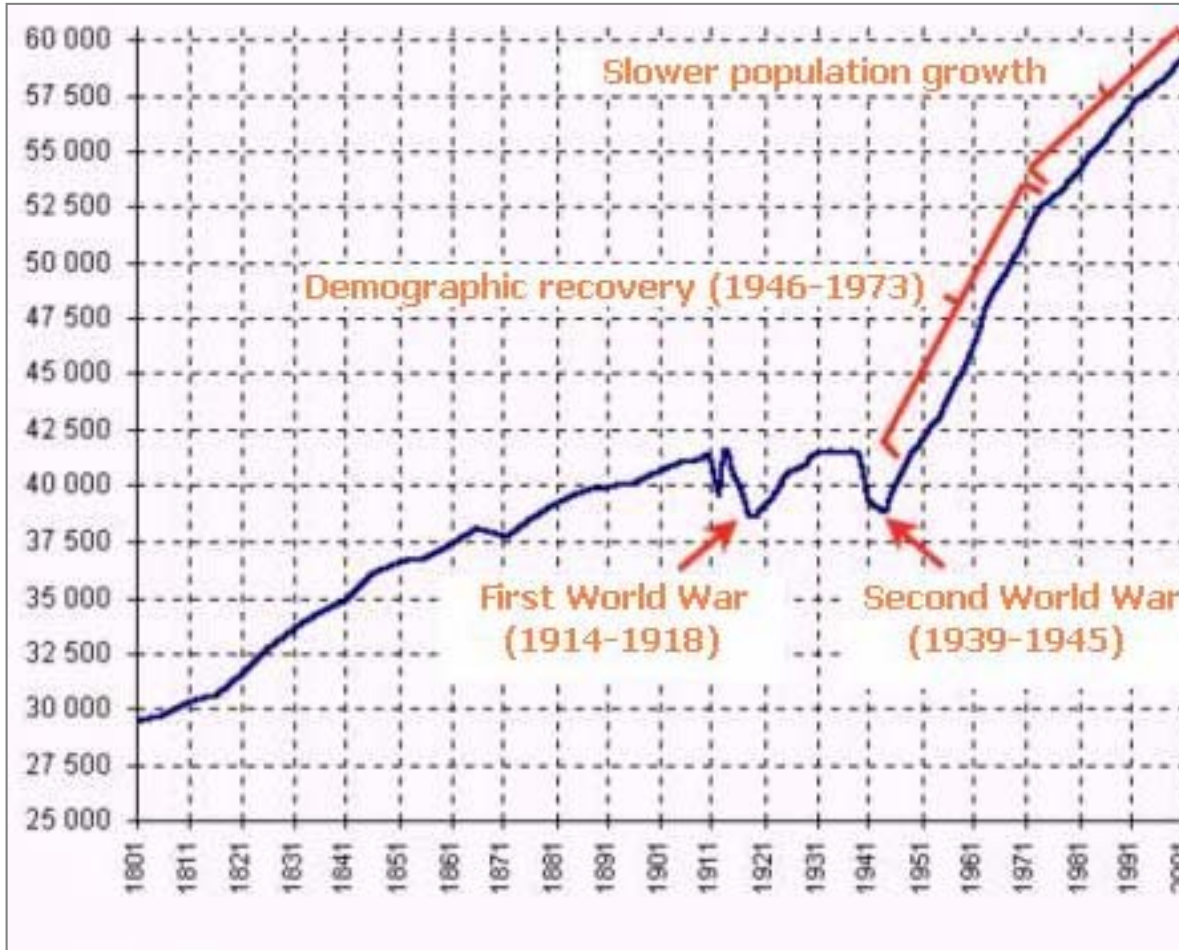
They say to me, the Jews have their own judges and laws. I respond that it is your fault and you should not allow it. We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals.

We must withdraw recognition from their judges; they should only have our judges. We must refuse legal protection to the maintenance of the so-called laws of their Judaic organization; they should not be allowed to form either a political body or an order within the state. They must be citizens individually. But, some will say, they do not want to be citizens. Well then! If they do not want to be citizens, they should say so, and then, we should banish them. It is repugnant to have in the state an association of non-citizens, and a nation within the nation. . . .

Count Stanislas–Marie–Adélaïde de Clermont–Tonnerre,
“Speech on Questionable Professions and Religious Minorities,”
23 December 1789.

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights.
Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.

France, a Country of Immigrants?



population of France, in 1000s

immigrants in Paris, 1926

Italian	101,800
Belgian	50,200
Russian	44,500
Polish	36,300
Spanish	31,500
“Africans”	27,500
Turks/Armenians	18,300
TOTAL	433,100

Foreigners in France (2006 census)

Note: Children born in France are automatically French citizens

France	61 million total residents
Portuguese	880,000
Algerian	700,000
Moroccans	600,000
Turks	200,000
Chinese	135,000
Belgians	100,000
Britons	100,000
Germans	95,000

French presidential elections, 2002

Jacques Chirac	RPR	19.8% 82.2%
Jean Marie Le Pen	Front National	16.86% 17.8%
Lionel Jospin	Socialist Party	16.18%
François Bayrou	UDF	6.84%
Arlette Laguillier	Lutte Ouvrière (Workers' Struggle)	5.72%
Noel Mamère	Green Party	5.25%
Olivier Besancenot	Revolutionary Communist League	4.25%
Robert Hue	Communist Party	3.37%



Many voters on the Left had come to see the Socialist Party as just as elitist and hierarchial as those of the "traditional" Right (both Chirac and Jospin graduated from the ENA). The Left vote splintered among five parties, and Le Pen benefitted.



FRONT NATIONAL



“Was General De Gaulle braver than Marshall Petain? I don't know; it's easier to resist in London than in France.” (1965)

"I ask myself several questions. I'm not saying the gas chambers didn't exist. I haven't seen them myself. I haven't particularly studied the question. But I believe it's just a detail in the history of World War II." (1987)

Jean Marie Le Pen

- 1956 elected deputy (Poujadiste)
- 1957-59 military service in Algeria
- 1960 co-founder National Front for French Algeria
- 1963 found guilty of being an “apologist for war crimes”
- 1976 cement millionaire leaves him fortune
- 1983 Front National allies with “traditional right” to win town government of Dreux
- 1988 Le Pen wins 11% in presidential election
- 2002 Le Pen second in first round presidential elections

“Olympic games show clearly inequalities between the black and white races concerning, for example, athletes, and runners in particular. It's a fact. [...] I'm stating what I see. [...] Egalitarianism is simply absurd.” (1996)

Human Rights and Anti-Immigration Rhetoric



“My husband, he’s a good Moslem.
He never hits me in the face.”
(cartoon on website of de Villiers supporter)

Should Turkey be admitted to the European Union?



Islamic Veil, Women’s Oppression
(Feminist-Laique Cooperation)



“You’re for zero percent immigration. So am I.”
Philippe de Villiers, Mouvement pour la France (2007)

The Headscarf Affair (*affaire des foulards*)



Lila and Alma Levy,
with their father (2005)



Aubervilliers

bois de Boulogne

bois de Vincennes

Riots, Gang Violence, or Revolutionary Tradition? Oct.-Nov. 2005



Nicolas Sarkozy
French president, 2007-

as Interior Minister in 2005, he called people in the *banlieues* “scum” who should be “cleaned with a blow torch”

Two French teenagers died fleeing the police in a Paris *banlieue* other youth in the same neighborhood protested, set vehicles and municipal buildings (schools, post offices) on fire eventually spread to all French *banlieues* (nearly 3000 people jailed) “state of emergency” declared, giving police exceptional powers in the *banlieues*

