

# **Policing Paris: Colonial Continuities**

October 1961 and May 1968

FR325 Week 11

# 17 October 1961 massacre

- FLN organized march to protest against police repression and discriminatory curfew
- ‘the bloodiest act of state repression of street protest in Western Europe in modern history’ (House & MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, p.1)
- around 200 peaceful protesters killed by police
- information suppressed: an organized silence
- trial of Maurice Papon, Préfet de Police, 1997-8, for his role in Deportation of some 1600 Jews including 130 children while a civil servant in the Gironde (1942-4)
- began a ten year prison sentence in 1998
- Papon released early in 2002; died 2007

# Maurice Papon



- 1940-62: postings variously in the Gironde, Algeria, Morocco and (from March 1958 to 1967) Paris
- counter-insurgency coercive techniques on mainland
- FLN's 'second front' on mainland (350,000)
- 'clash of civilisations' perspective typical
- Special Powers Act 1956: militarization
- October massacre as radical extrajudicial riposte to FLN assassinations of police officers summer 1961
- note also Charonne massacre Feb 1962: 9 trade unionists demonstrating against OAS killed by police

# The 'Papon System': precedents

- continuity with Vichy's methods in Deportation (H&M, 34)
- May 1945 massacre of unarmed protestors
- Sétif massacre of 15,000-45,000 Algerians
- denial, censorship and concealment
- Papon back in Paris from 1951:
  - aggressive police campaign to crush nationalists
  - reconstitution in 1953 of Brigade des agressions et violences (BAV): brutal nocturnal operations against Algerian cafés, lodgings
- posted to Morocco in 1954
  - *ratissage* of the Rabat Medina: organized police brutality, 20 killed and countless wounded
- posted to Algeria 1956-8
  - directed 'pacification' operations and in charge of both military and civilian security operations in the Constantinois
  - forcible eviction and resettlement (*regroupement*): by 1958 he had forcibly resettled 360,000
  - established torture training centres: Centre de pacification et de contre-guerilla at Arzew; set up new policing units of Arabic-speaking *harkis*

# The Papon System in Paris (1958-)

- Papon brought back from Algeria to head Paris police after 2000 police stormed Assemblée Nationale March 1958
- FLN Fédération de France's counter-state
  - sophisticated cellular control of population: impermeable to French intelligence services
  - income tax on immigrant workers raised 80% of fighting budget for Algerian independence movement
- creation of SCAA March 1958 (Service de coordination des affaires algériennes), a specialist police unit to counter FLN
- creation of SAT-FMA (Service d'assistance technique aux Français musulmans d'Algérie) to rival FLN, break down segregation and infiltrate Algerian community
- 7 October 1958 *Ordonnance*:
  - Algerians could be interned for 2 weeks without trial, allowing for interrogation (& torture)
  - deportation of unconvicted suspects back to military regime in Algeria
- disruption of FLN in mass nocturnal 'relocations' from lodging houses ('Opération Osmose')
- use of mass bureaucratic coercion as route to intelligence-gathering
- constitution of *fichiers* intended to bring sociological mastery of population
- use of mass stop and search: in 1959 some 121,699 => internment and fingerprinting
- disruption of earning capacity of individuals and FLN
- strategic purpose to create sense of insecurity; companies refused to employ 'unreliable' Algerians
- deportation of thousands of innocents to Algeria as psychological state terror (see H&M, 76-7)

# Systematic police violence

- *harkis* to be installed in FLN enclaves in Paris
- the first shipload arrived from Algeria in December 1959
- use of plain-clothes units to generate mistrust and panic
- patrols of these units: identity checks, assault, interrogation at Vincennes
- parallel paramilitary police force
- pulled out to Fort Noisy in June 1961 during Evian negotiations

# September-October massacre

- 29 August – 3 October 1961: 13 police killed in FLN attacks
- climate of police frustration at 'liberal' regime
- acceleration of deportation to Algeria, sweep operations in the *bidonvilles* and the night-time curfew
- from 5 September some 500 arrests a day (H&M, 97)
- assassinations began in September: bodies recovered from the Seine and canals of Paris without papers, usually unidentifiable
- suspected members of FLN liquidated
- Papon responded with propagandist misinformation
- De Gaulle ignored the massacre
- Papon remained in post as Préfet until 1967



Front page of *L'Humanité* (October 1961)



# Mai 68



- Maurice Grimaud took over as Préfet de Police in January 1967
- the workers and students who took to the streets had all seen ‘to what use the Gaullist regime put their police’ (Ross, 27), albeit under Grimaud’s predecessor Papon
- in May *la matraque* came to symbolize repressive state violence as administered by the police (Ross), or the police as ‘Repressive State Apparatus’
- the encounter with the police formative of political consciousness
- police violence played a ‘catalytic’ role:
  - unprecedented decision to invite police into the Sorbonne on May 3rd
- Pierre Grappin: ‘Most of the students were apolitical in the beginning, they disapproved of the incidents at Nanterre. But they were instinctually on the side of the March 22<sup>nd</sup> group... because the police were there and that signified for them an intolerable repression.’ (cited in Ross, 28)



May 68 represented by the collective of the Atelier Populaire des Beaux-Arts

- 13<sup>th</sup> May demonstration explicitly against ‘la répression policière’
  - rumours about police brutality spread in tracts
  - alleged use of chemical weapons
  - killings and disappearances of demonstrators
  - ‘une campagne très vive sur les “atrocités policières”’  
(Grimaud, *En Mai, fais ce qu’il te plaît*, 1977, p.119)
- Grimaud: very conscious of the catalysing role that police killings could play politically (1848 Revolution), especially with media coverage
- impact on police tactics
- G resisted government pressure to be more brutal

Screening of clip from William Klein, *Grands soirs et petits matins* (1968 documentary)

1er discours de De Gaulle à la Radio (4:52=>)

# Upcoming research seminar

- On Wednesday 25th January (Week 3) we will hold our first event in the new SMLC Research Seminar Series.
- Nick Hewlett and Oliver Davis from French Studies will be giving papers on 'Policing Mai 68: theories, techniques, legacy'.
- These will be followed by a further 20 minutes of discussion.
- The event will take place in H4.50 (across the bridge), 1:00 to 2:00