

# 'Pacifying' Algeria

Jérôme Ferrari,  
*Où j'ai laissé mon âme* (2010)

FR325 Week 8

# The Algerian War (1954-62)

- 2m French soldiers involved
- fall of Fourth Republic, return of De Gaulle with advent of Fifth
- euphemisms:
  - ‘événements’ (1954)
  - ‘opérations de police’ (1954-5)
  - ‘actions de maintien de l’ordre’ (1956-7)
  - ‘opérations de rétablissement de la paix civile’ (1957)
  - ‘entreprises de pacification’ (1957-62)
  - ‘le drame algérien’ (newsreels throughout the conflict)

# Algeria as colony

- invasion 1830
- Statute of 1947:
  - extension of mainland as 3 *départements*
  - Governor General
  - Algerian Assembly
    - 120 members from 2 electoral colleges, each with an equal share:
      1. full French citizens (colonizers) + about 58,000 'Muslim' citizens (native Algerians, the colonized)
      2. 1,300,000 'Muslim' voters (colonized)
    - in 1948 population 860,000 French colonizers and 7,700,000 native Algerians
- The Algerian War
  - 30 October 1954 (3 hrs, 70 targets, 2000 arrests, torture)
  - riots of 25-25 August 1955; 123 killed and 12,000 native Algerians killed in reprisals
  - Les Pouvoirs Spéciaux (March 1956)
  - le quadrillage
  - The Battle of Algiers (1956-7)
  - De Gaulle:
    - 1 June 1958 Head of Government; develops new constitution
    - 8 January 1959 president of new Fifth Republic
    - threat of military coup: 22-25 April 1961, Michel Debré)
    - OAS (Organisation de l'Armée Secrète)
    - Evian Accords
    - independence of Algeria declared 3 July 1962

# 'La torture d'État'

- Torture as most extreme expression of state power (Vidal-Naquet)
- Purpose of torture?
- Ancient Greece to Church in Middle Ages
- Cesare Beccaria (1764 treatise)
- 1948 UN Assembly Declaration
- 1987 UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT)

- As affront to Republican and Enlightenment values
- ‘Out-sourcing’ of torture during WW2 to ‘gestapistes’: ‘infection’ model
- Madagascar uprising 1947
- French Indochina (1930s and 1946-1954)

# Torture in the Algerian War

- Varieties of torture practised
- Aftermath of insurrections of 31 Oct / 1 Nov 1954
- François Mauriac, 'La Question' (15 Jan 1955)
- Pierre Mendès France: 'horribles excès, qui ont parfois été commis, qu'on a exagérés par moments, j'en convins, mais auxquels il faut mettre fin, partout et rapidement' (Jan 1955, cited in Vidal-Naquet, 30)

- Secret reports (Wuillaume & Mairey)
- Scale: from 60,000 troops (1954) to 500,000 (1956)
- 1957: General Massu and the utilitarian defence of torture
- 1957: Commission de sauvegarde des droits et libertés individuels (1957)
- Amnesty of 14 April 1962