

COMMON SENSE;

ADDRESSED TO THE

W. Hamilton

INHABITANTS

O F

A M E R I C A,

On the following interesting

S U B J E C T S.

- I. Of the Origin and Design of Government in general, with concise Remarks on the English Constitution.
- II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession.
- III. Thoughts on the present State of American Affairs.
- IV. Of the present Ability of America, with some miscellaneous Reflections.

By Thomas Paine

Man knows no Master save creating HEAVEN,
Or those whom choice and common good ordain.

THOMSON.

PHILADELPHIA;

Printed, and Sold, by R. BELL, in Third-Street.

MDCC LXX VI.

***Fear engenders cruelty, fear, insanity and then
paralysis. In the center of Dante's circle,
the damned remained motionless.***

— Pierre Leulliette

Upon returning to school in Lausanne, I'm reading Carl Van Doren's *Benjamin Franklin* for my course on American diplomacy. I discovered that Franklin had given the American Revolution its most eloquent literary advocate, Thomas Paine. When Franklin met Paine in London, the diplomat encouraged him to immigrate to America. Franklin provided Paine with letters of introduction to help him establish himself in Philadelphia. Two years later, Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*, electrified America. Eventually, one half million copies were printed, read aloud in the homes and taverns throughout the thirteen colonies.



***Fashion Before Ease*, Cartoon, 1793. Thomas Paine trusses up Britannica
– Cartoon by James Gillray, U.S. Library of Congress, Wikimedia**

In the beginning many colonials didn't want independence from Great Britain. Paine's *Common Sense* was a critical piece of propaganda because it gave the man in the street convincing reasons to abolish hereditary monarchy and establish a republic where all citizens could vote. Paine did more to delegitimize monarchy and to recruit soldiers for George Washington's Continental Army than any writer during the American Revolution. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson acknowledged the debt they owed to Paine's fervent argument for Americans to support the Revolution. While traveling with the Continental Army, Paine wrote the inspirational *The American Crisis*, "These are the times that try men's souls." President John Adams said that without Paine's *Common Sense*, the "sword of Washington would have been raised in vain."

When Paine returned to England, he wrote *The Age of Reason*, a rebuttal to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that had criticized the Revolution. Paine's essay advocated a progressive tax, the



Portrait of Thomas Paine, 1791 – Painting by Laurent Dabos, National Portrait Gallery, Wikimedia

use of reason in political matters instead of religious doctrine. He called for an end to hereditary aristocracy and the divine right of kings. Paine also argued for Deism — God doesn't intervene with the process of the natural world in any way. The Universe operates by laws of nature which cannot be changed by God by intervening in natural processes to produce miracles. Once John Adams learned of Paine's religious views he wrote, "The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity, and humanity, let the Blackguard Paine say what he will."



Thomas Paine and scientist, Joseph Priestley with guns, knives, axes, brimstone, and kegs of gunpowder, plotting murder and revolution – Caricature by Isaac Cruikshank, Photo by Will Brown, Science History Institute, Wikimedia

Accused of sedition in England, Paine fled to France to escape hanging. In Paris, *The Age of Reason* was so popular that the French elected him to the assembly even though he couldn't speak French. Along with Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine was awarded honorary French citizenship. Associated with the Girondists, he voted for the French Republic but opposed the execution of Louis XVI. Paine argued that because of Louis XIV's support for the American Revolution he should not be executed.



Execution of Louis XVI, 1794 – Engraving by Isidore Stanislas Helman after Charles Monnet, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Wikimedia

In the many years that Benjamin Franklin spent in Paris as the American Ambassador to France, one of his remarkable achievements was his keen perception in recognizing talent in men. Franklin recommended to Washington, Baron von Steuben, the Prussian general who during the nadir of the American Continental Army's misery in the freezing cold of Valley Forge, whipped Washington's untrained and disheartened troops into a formidable fighting force. Von Steuben taught them how to organize their fighting units in the Prussian fashion, how to lay out a hygienic camp and above all, how to use the bayonet as weapon rather than an eating utensil. Wearing a full-dress uniform, the Prussian officer screamed and yelled at the ragged troops in harsh and strident German. Incomprehensible to the Americans, the general's German was translated into French and finally into English before the bewildered troops could understand. Von Steuben made each company commander responsible for the training of new recruits and wrote the army's manual based on the principles he devised at Valley Forge, which led to von Steuben being appointed Inspector-General of the Continental Army. The Prussian's training and discipline transformed the Continentals. At the battle of Stony Point, they charged with bayonets and unloaded muskets and won a surprise victory with no ammunition. Von Steuben was the major-general in command of one of Washington's three divisions in the final victory of the war at Yorktown. The interesting story was that von Steuben had been charged with a homosexual liaison in Prussia, which would explain his desire to go to America. Without von Steuben reorganization of the Continental Army, it very well may have been impossible for Washington's army to survive those first bitter few years. How many Americans are aware that one of the five foreign-born heroes of the Revolution, a gay Prussian general was a decisive force in Washington's final victory?"



Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, 1780 – Painting by Charles Willson Peale, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Wikimedia

Another brilliant perception of Benjamin Franklin was to recognize the Scottish John Paul Jones as a born fighter. Franklin's reputation among the French as the frontier sage and his uncanny persuasive powers inspired a French shipping baron to give an ancient East Indiaman merchant ship, *Duc de Duras* to America, a slow-moving freighter which was far from being the equal of a British ship of the line. Captain John Paul Jones, delighted to have any ship that he could arm to the teeth, renamed the old ship, the *Bonhomme Richard* in honor of Benjamin's Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Published under the title, *Les Maximes du Bonhomme Richard*, the book had made Franklin a celebrity in Paris.

Captain John Paul Jones armed and refitted the old creaky old tub with forty-two guns from the Ministry of Marine, nine of which blew up the very first time fired. Jones gathered a motley crew of seamen from many nations including two American Indians, and shanghaied some very drunk sailors in the dives of Brest and through Franklin's skillful negotiations, presciently furnished the *Bonhomme Richard* with a company of sharp shooting Royal French marines who commanded the top masts to devastating effect.



Paul Jones the pirate. British caricature of American naval commander John Paul Jones – Engraving by A. Park, U.S. National Archives, Wikimedia



Engraving based on the painting *Action Between the Serapis and Bonhomme Richard, 1780* – Painting by Richard Paton, Wikimedia

Jones terrified the locals by audaciously invading the coast of Britain and to the amazement of the world in the Battle of Flamborough Head off the East coast of England, defeated the most advanced British ship of the line, the copper-bottomed *Serapis* despite many of John Paul's canons exploding during the first minutes of combat killing many of his crew and his ship *Bonhomme Richard* leaking so badly it was barely afloat. The bloody fight cost the lives of half the American and British crews, but the astounding victory was the key to Franklin's convincing the French crown to support the American Revolution. Shattered and on fire, The *Bonhomme Richard* sank the following day. Jones sailed the damaged *Serapis* to a friendly Dutch port for repairs while all of Paris celebrated the American victory confirming Benjamin Franklin's belief in the fighting spirit of John Paul Jones, a Scottish immigrant who wasn't even an American citizen.

In addition to Benjamin Franklin's diplomatic skills during his many years in Paris, Marquis de Lafayette deserves much credit for the decisive French intervention. It was a stroke of luck for the Continental Army when Lafayette's friend, Marquis de Castries became France's Minister of Marine. Influenced by Lafayette, the pro-American de Castries persuaded Louis XVI to send a fleet of ships of the line to support Washington. The French fleet commanded by Admiral Comte de Grasse defeated the British fleet of Admiral Thomas Graves in the Battle of the Chesapeake setting up the blockade of Yorktown which prevented Cornwallis' trapped army from being evacuated by the British navy.



Battle of Flamborough Head, his Majesty's Ship *Serapis* commanded by Captain Pearson, and the *Bonhomme Richard* commanded by John Paul Jones, 23 September 1779 – Painting by Robert Dodd, 1815, Wikimedia



Blockade of the British army of Lord Cornwallis by the French fleet of Comte de Grasse, 1778 – Unknown author, Wikimedia



LaFayette wounded at the battle of Brandywine – Illustration by Charles Henry Jeans, Wikimedia



Bataille de Yorktown, 1781. Rochambeau and Washington giving their last orders before the battle – Painting by Auguste Couder, 1836, Palace of Versailles, Wikimedia



Bataille de Yorktown, 1781. Rochambeau and Washington giving their last orders before the battle – Painting by Auguste Couder, 1836, Palace of Versailles, Wikimedia



The storming of redoubt #10. Siege of Yorktown. Painting by Eugène Lami, Public domain, Wikimedia



Surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, 1797 – Painting by John Trumbull, Wikimedia

In arguing for the king's life before the Revolutionary Assembly, Paine reminded the French that the king had provided Washington's Continental Army with General Comte de Rochambeau's 8,000 troops, the cavalry of the Duc de Lauzun's Legion under the Marquis de Choisy, the Comte de Grasse's French fleet of twenty-nine ships and 500,000 silver pesos to fund the salaries of 11,000 American troops. Paine told the French revolutionaries that without the enormous funding by the French crown, Washington would not have defeated General Cornwallis in the Battle of Yorktown.

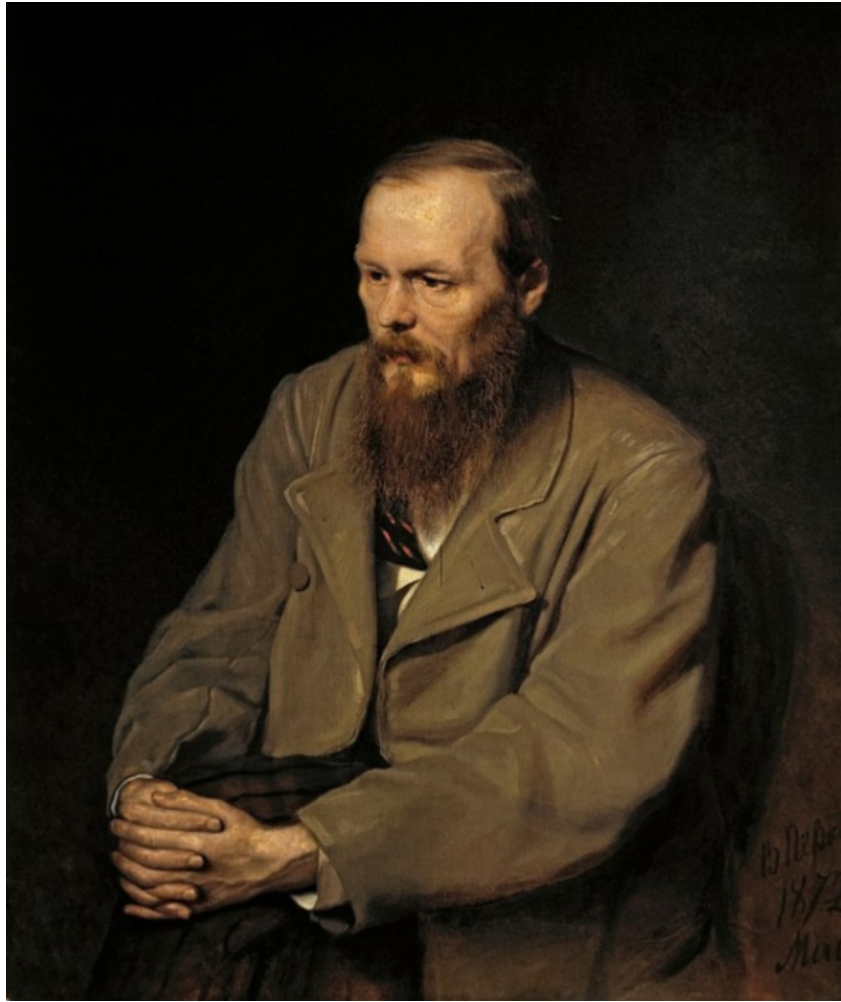
Paine said the execution of Louis XVI would be a revenge killing, which was contemptible. Paine had long objected to capital punishment. In many religions, the concept of an eye for an eye justifies the execution of people convicted of crimes, including those that are political. Yvonne believed that the sadism of executions increases nihilism in the culture. Execution is an act of public revenge which only serves to breed further violence. Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* is an unbearable meditation on murder and the horrors of execution which he understood so profoundly from his own near death. After reading Proudhon, Fourier, and Saint-Simon and their concern for the destitute and the disadvantaged, Dostoevsky joined a group advocating social reforms, especially the abolishment of serfdom. A year after the revolutions of 1848 shook the royal heads of state and

fearing a revolution like the Decembrist revolt of 1825, Tsar Nicolas I ordered the arrest of Dostoevsky's group for reading revolutionary literature like Belinsky's *Letter to Gogol*, imprisoned him in the hellhole of Peter and Paul Fortress and sentenced him to die by firing squad in Semyonov Place in St Petersburg.



Petrashkevsky Circle mock execution, 1849 – Illustration by B. Pokrovsky, Wikimedia

Tied to a post with the soldiers ready to fire, Tsar Nicolas I sent a last-minute reprieve sentencing him to hard labor in a Siberian prison, a trauma which gave Dostoevsky a profound insight into the death penalty. Commonly there has been a political, racial, or religious bias at work in death penalty decisions. In the U.S., those condemned to death in the state of Texas have included a disproportionately high percentage of blacks. The poor whites and blacks do not have the benefit of effective legal counsel — especially when they are facing the death penalty. Emile Charreau said that in the 12th century, the Sephardic philosopher Moses Maimonides said it was better to acquit a thousand guilty persons than to put one innocent man to death.



Portrait of Fedor Dostoyevsky, 1872 – Painting by Vasily Perov, Tretyakov Gallery, Wikimedia



Dostoyevsky sentenced to prison for a censorship offense, 1874 – Unknown author, Public domain, Wikimedia



Portrait of Maximilien de Robespierre – Unknown author, Musée Carnavalet, Wikimedia

By arguing for the life of the king, Paine got in trouble with the Montagnards and especially Maximilien Robespierre who was intent on executing the king. Paine was arrested and condemned to the guillotine.



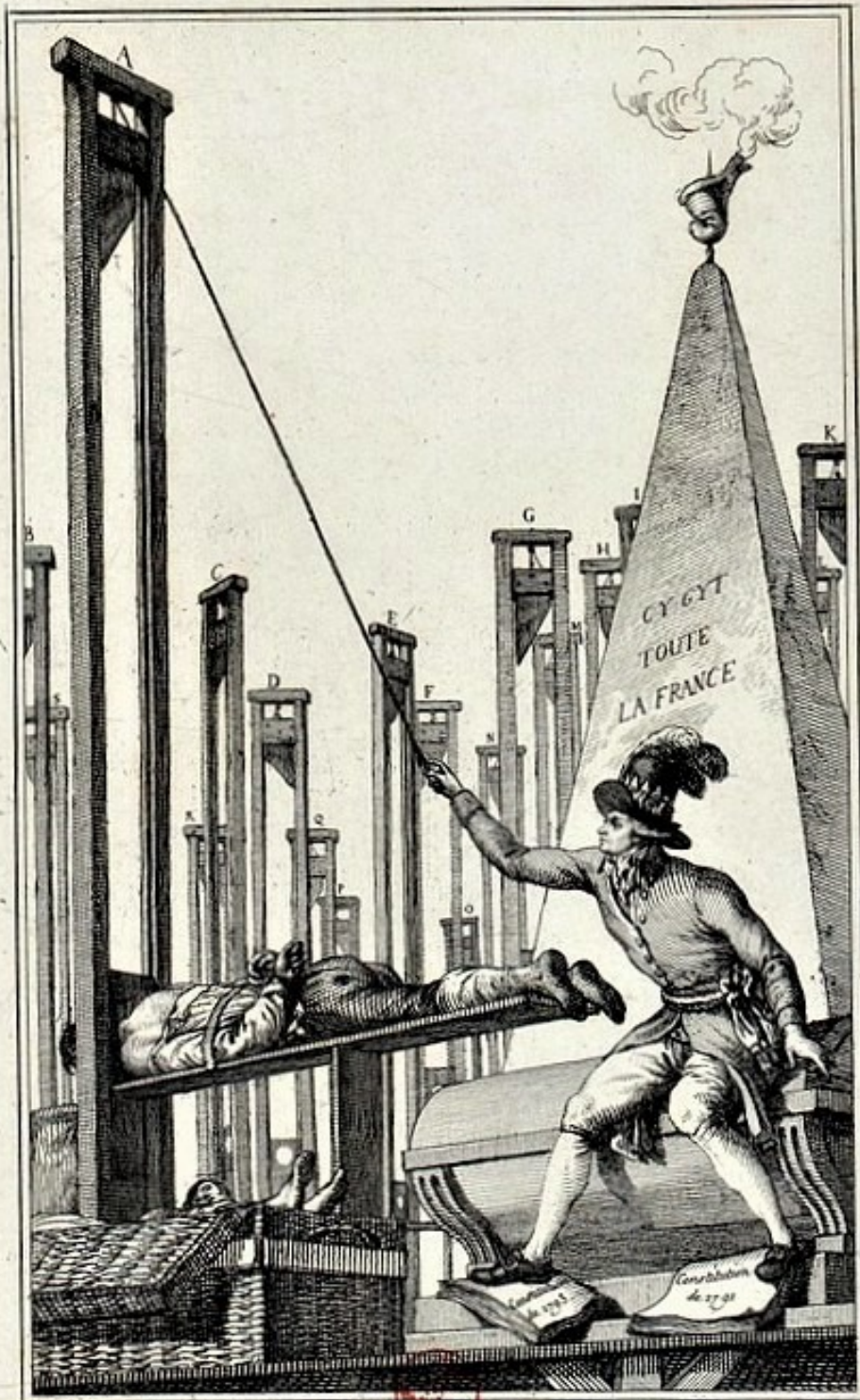
Demonstration of 20 June 1792 at the Tuileries Palace – Estampe by Pierre Bouillon, engraved by Jean-Baptiste V érit é, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Wikimedia



Storming of the Bastille and arrest of the Governor M. de Launay, 14 July 1789 – Painting by Jean-Baptiste Lallemand, Musée de la Révolution Française, Wikimedia

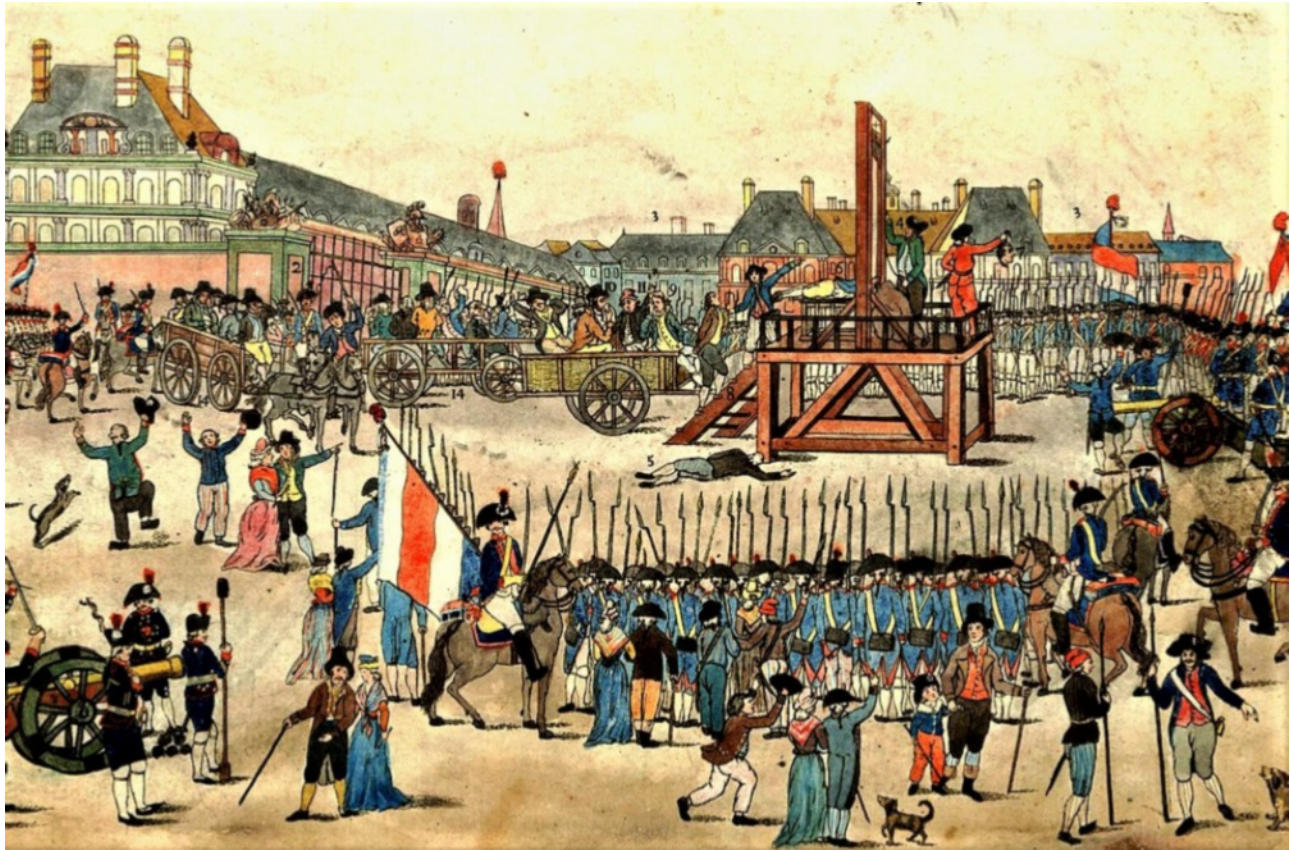


Storming of the Tuileries Palace, 10 August 1792 – Painting by Jean Duplessis-Bertaux, Palace of Versailles, Wikimedia



ROBESPIERRE, guillotinant le bourreau après avoir fait guillotiner tous les Français.
 A le Bourreau, B le comité de Salut Public, C le comité de Sureté générale, D le Tribunal Révolutionnel,
 E les Jacobins, F les Cordeliers, G les Brissotins, H Girondins, I Philpôtins, K Chabotins, L Hébertistes,
 M les Nobles et les Prêtres, N les Gens à talents, O les Vieillards, Femmes et Enfants, P les Soldats et
 les Généraux, Q les Autorités Constituées, R la Convention Nationale, S les Sociétés Populaires.

Estampe, 1794. Cartoon showing Robespierre guillotining the executioner after having guillotined everyone else in France— Unknown author, Wikimedia



The execution of Maximilien Robespierre and his allies, 28 July 1794. The beheaded man is Georges Couthon. Robespierre sits on the cart, wearing a hat, and holding a handkerchief to his mouth. His younger brother Augustin Robespierre is being led up the steps to the scaffold – Unknown author, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Wikimedia

His head was saved only by the fact that his enemy Robespierre lost his head first. Jean-Paul Sartre said, “A revolution that assumes that to survive it must crush left and right, like Robespierre did, like Stalin, must fail.” Paine was finally released from prison by James Monroe, Minister to France and future President who declared to the Revolutionary government that Paine was a highly regarded American citizen. Thomas Paine was ahead of his time. There are not many men who are as principled as Paine. His principles came close to costing his life twice. A strong opponent of slavery in America, Paine foresaw that the American Revolution would increase the desire for freedom in all corners of the world.

Along with my dance, I’m concentrating on my writing. My thesis for my European foreign affairs class at Lausanne is on the issue which has divided France since I was thirteen — the Algerian War. To perfect my mastery of the language, I am writing my thesis in English, and will submit it for publication to *Contemporary Historical Review* in the United Kingdom. The essay I wrote last year on the uprising of the Paris Commune my school’s *grand prix du literature*. I give credit to Yvonne for my success because of her critical support of my writing. She gave me a new bicycle for winning the prize.

The quest for Algerian independence was the critical issue for Yvonne. I want to complete my sister's work. I've gotten back in touch with political historian Emile Charreau who was the former lover of my sister. While Emile is a womanizer, he is a necessary for my research, for the handsome, vain, brilliant devil is world renown for his many papers on colonialism and the Algerian War. But I need him most for his valuable underground contacts within the French secret service. In the years before Yvonne died, the use of torture and extra-judicial killings in Algeria was a burning question for her. As Sartre said, torture "is a plague infecting our whole era." Yvonne was ahead of public opinion for only now are the French waking up to what must be done to achieve justice. I'm dedicating my essay to my sister. Yvonne, I'm carrying the torch for you.

The sources on the war give conflicting information. Yvonne once said, history can't be effectively written until a decade or two later, sometimes 100 years later. Many things don't come to light until government archives are unsealed. As Voltaire said, "All comes out even at the end of the day, and all comes out still more even when all the days are over." Although secrets are entombed in silence, like bodies buried in drifting sands, one day we'll find the bones of the dead.

Since DeGaulle has returned to power, the government has announced a referendum on self-determination in Algeria. President of the United States John F. Kennedy supports an Algerian peace settlement and the Political Committee of the UN has decided that any referendum on Algerian independence should be supervised by the United Nations. The General Assembly has voted sixty-three to eight, with twenty-seven abstentions, for the right of the Algerian people to self-determination and independence. After the Évian Accords declared a ceasefire between France and the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, General Raoul Salan and a number of renegade French generals have formed the paramilitary Organisation de l'armée secrète, a terrorist campaign of bombing and assassination which the OAS intends to push the Liberation Front into abandoning the ceasefire.

With many of the *pièd noirs* being of Italian descent, the plastic explosive bombs are named *strongas* from the Italian word, *stroncare*, 'to break, suppress, destroy.' Last week, the OAS assassinated the head of the French Algerian police and in the last month alone, detonated 100 bombs, every day indiscriminately killing Muslims and provoking FLN atrocities in return. One victim's skull was sliced open, the brain removed and left on the pavement. The paroxysm of terror is creating a chasm of revulsion between European and Arab, turning Algiers into a dead zone of empty streets, abandoned cinemas and cafes, people frozen with fear like in *La Peste*, Albert Camus' novel where the bubonic plague swallows up everything and everyone.



Supporters of General Jacques Massu set barricades on rue Michelet d'Alger, January 1960 – Author, Christophe Marcheux, Wikimedia

In my paper, I ask the question: was France justified in continuing the war while thousands of French and Algerians died in a doomed attempt to prevent Algeria's independence? My focus is principally on the *methods* the French have used in fighting a colonial war and how those methods will bring a French defeat and ultimately independence to the Algerians. Algeria's case is much different than Tunisia and Morocco which were colonial protectorates. In contrast, Algeria was an integral part of France and sent deputies to the Assembly in Paris. Due to the integration of Algeria, the political class of France found it unthinkable to abandon Algeria. But viewing Algeria as an extension of France ignored the contradiction that there were seven million Algerians who did not have the same rights as the one million French settlers, *les pied noirs*. The Muslims lived under a form of apartheid, prohibited from living in certain areas. When Algeria was on the brink of war, Germaine Tillion, an anthropologist who during the thirties had studied the culture of the Aurès region of Algeria, was in New York investigating Nazi and Soviet war crimes, interior Minister Francois Mitterrand asked Tillion to return to the Aurès and report on the condition of the people. Tillion was renowned for being co-founder of a Resistance group in Paris during the occupation and helping British prisoners of war escape after Dunkirk. She had been the only one of the leaders of her resistance group to survive torture and three years in the horrifying Ravensbrück concentration camp.

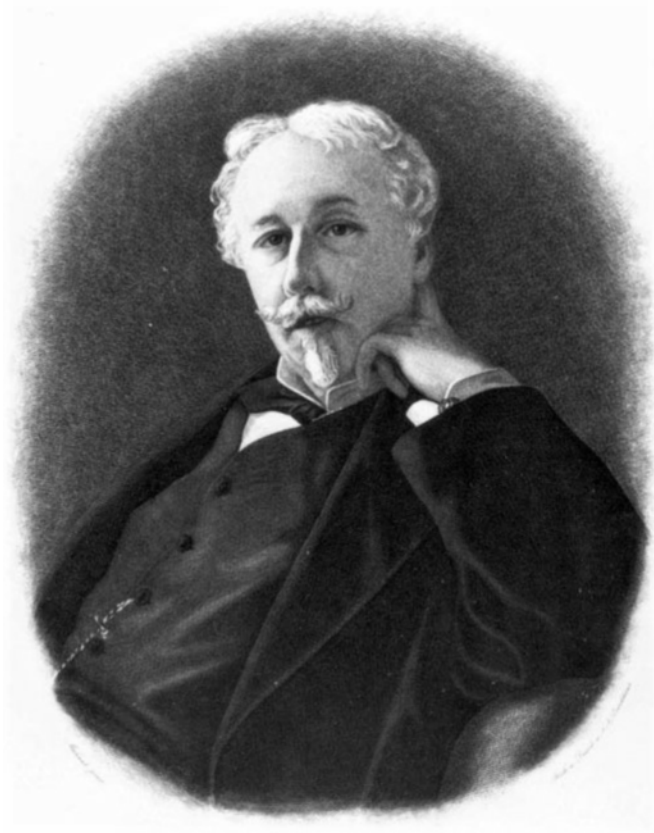


Women prisoners in Ravensbrück concentration camp – Unknown author, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia

Awarded the Croix de Guerre and the Légion d'honneur, no Frenchwoman knew the Aurès region as well as Tillion. When she returned, Tillion was shocked by the conditions of the starving peasants whose goats had died of starvation. They were reduced to eating their grain seed, their only hope for next year's crop. On a visit to his native Algeria, writer Albert Camus had been horrified to find children fighting with dogs for bits of food in the garbage. Tillion said the root cause of the conflict between *pied-noirs* and Algerians was the *clochardisation*, the impoverishment of the indigenous Algerians. The two ethnic peoples were divided in wealth by an imbalance of five to one. One million Muslims were unemployed, another two million occasionally employed. Tillion observed that freedom is impossible when most are living in poverty with no access to education. Only fourteen percent of Muslim children went to school. Seventy-five percent of the Muslims were illiterate in Arabic, ninety per cent in French. Algerian women were particularly disenfranchised. Over the years, waves of settlers had arrived not only from France but from Malta, Spain, and Italy, prompting Anatole France to say, 'We have despoiled, pursued, and hunted down the Arabs in order to populate Algeria with Italians and Spaniards.' Gradually the settlers forced the Algerians off the best farmland and after the

phylloxera disease devastated the French vineyards, much of the land that had once produced food for Algerians was converted to vineyards to produce wine for export. While the beautiful beaches of sand were reserved for the French, the beaches of pebbles were reserved for the Algerians.

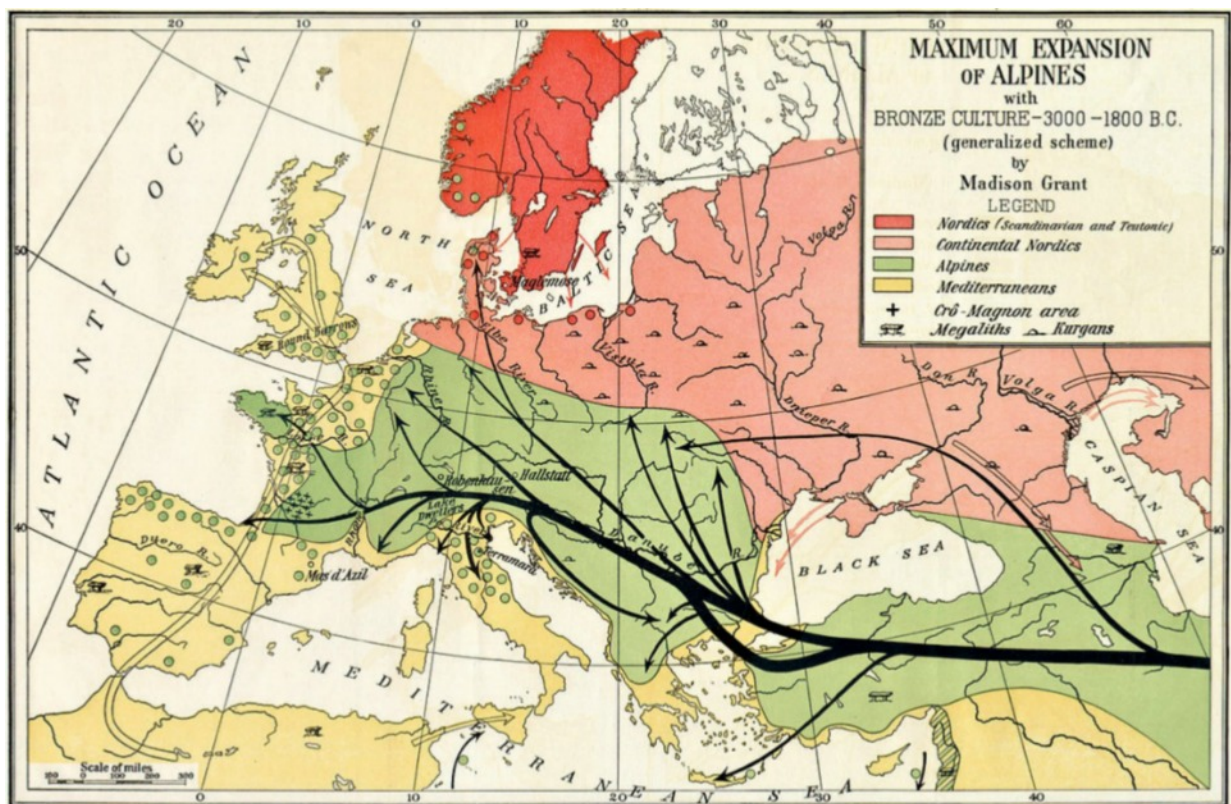
African scholars have said that during the pre-colonial period African cultures retained some control over their political and economic life. That control was lost under colonialism. Colonizers are convinced of their own superiority which gave them a mandate to rule. In the last century, many pseudo-scientific studies appeared to prove the white man's intellectual superiority. A French royalist, Arthur Gobineau's essay, *Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races* published in the middle of the 19th century, claimed that race created culture.



Arthur de Gobineau, French diplomat, writer, and philosopher of racial superiority, 1876 – Portrait by the Comtesse de la Tour, Wikimedia. Gobineau's pseudo scientific racial theories of *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* influenced prominent antisemites like Richard Wagner.

Gobineau racial theories are among the earliest and most influential theories of the Aryan master race. He said that the mixing of races would degrade the superiority of the Aryan people, in which he primarily meant the German people. Miscegenation of races would result in the creation of degenerate people and lead to chaos. Since Gobineau praised the Jews for being enterprising and intelligent, the Nazis censors had to heavily edit his work as they did Frederick Nietzsche's writings to reflect Nazis racial ideology.

In the last century, various theories of scientific racism, the belief in European superiority, established a philosophical base to justify exploitation of colonial peoples. Craniology, comparative anatomy, phrenology, even the form of genitalia was used as a way of determining the superiority of Caucasians. During the First World War, Madison Grant, a lawyer educated at Yale and Columbia, published *The Passing of the Great Race, the Racial Basis of European History*, to establish racism on a scientific foundation. As vice president of the Immigration Restriction League, and world recognized ‘expert on racial data,’ Madison Grant supplied the statistics to establish immigration quotas for various countries in the United States Immigration Act of 1924. Like many eugenicists of the time, Grant believed that contemporary civilization violated the principle of “survival of the fittest.” He said that within one hundred years, by selective breeding, we could eliminate the “undesirables who crowd our jails, hospitals, and insane asylums.” The solution for a healthy society can only be achieved by a rigid system of selection to eliminate the weak. By gradually extending the process of elimination of weaklings, we can ultimately eliminate worthless race types from the human gene pool and begin to “restore the worthwhile race types conducive to Nordic society.” Agreeing with Madison Grant twenty-five years later, Hitler said in *Mein Kampf*, “He who is bodily and mentally not sound and deserving, may not perpetuate this misfortune in the bodies of his children.”



“Maximum Expansion of Alpines.” – Map from American eugenicist Madison Grant’s 1916 book, *The Passing of the Great Race*, American Geographical Society, Wikimedia

Once colonized by the Europeans, Africans could no longer determine cultural goals nor control the education of their young. The history of the African tribes has not been told in Europe. The Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, published recently, was the first chance we've had to learn about the history of an Igbo village. Achebe shows how British colonialism and Christian missionaries destroyed the traditional Igbo life, even forcing them to change their language.



Thatching a traditional house with palm leaf mats among Igbo people of Nigeria – Author G.T. Basden, *Among the Igbos of Nigeria*, Wikimedia

The Igbo tribes ruled themselves, but after the British had seized control, they imposed a hierarchal government with district commissioners selected from other tribes, men who had no loyalty to those they ruled, creating a system which led to bribery and corruption and degraded the traditional democratic ways of the Igbo people. Despite the convenient European belief that the white man was going to raise up the savage, the sole purpose of colonialism was to exploit natural resources and transfer the wealth to the mother country. This was the core issue in Algeria — the legacy of colonialism.

The revolution has been a long time coming to Algeria. On May 8, 1945, the day that Nazi Germany surrendered, 5,000 Algerians held a VE Day parade in Sétif to celebrate the victory for which many Algerian

soldiers had given their life. During the previous weeks there had been incidents of protest mounted against French colonial rule with graffiti appearing on the walls, “Muslims awaken!” “Français you will be massacred.”

Fearing an insurrection by the Parti du Peuple Algérien, the authorities had incarcerated the leader, Messali Hadj in Brazzaville, French Equatorial Africa. The Compagnie Genevoise, owed by Swiss bankers that controlled thousands of hectares of the best farmlands, had a bountiful harvest, whereas the natives had suffered two years of crop failures. The depletion of emergency rations by the Vichy government had left the Algerians on the verge of famine. On VE Day when the United Nations Charter was about to be signed in San Francisco along with declarations of self-determination for colonial people, and the Arab League had just been created in Cairo, the mass march of the Muslims commenced under a French ban for all political banners. Despite the ban, the 8,000 Algerian demonstrators who poured into Sétif from the countryside were waving the green-and-white flag of the legendary hero of Algerian resistance, Abd-el-Kader who in the early 19th century had waged war for fifteen years against French occupation. The Sétif demonstrators were not only carrying Abd-el-Kader’s green-and-white flag which would eventually become the flag of the F.L.N. liberation movement, they were marching with banners carrying slogans: “Free Messali!” “Long Live Free and Independent Algeria!”



Grand Hôtel de France, Sétif, Algeria – Post Card, 1920, Unknown author, Wikimedia

When the gendarmes tried to seize the anti-colonial banners of the demonstrators, shooting broke out, and the enraged marchers began killing French *colons*. The frenzy of the Algerian uprising spread to other towns, five days of pillage and burning of houses and stores, 100 Europeans murdered, corpses mutilated, women with their breasts slashed off, men with severed sexual organs stuffed into their mouths.

The French army responded by a fierce attack on the Muslim population in the Guelma and Constantine provinces. *Pied noir* vigilantes lynched Muslim prisoners seized from local jails and shot Algerians at random in the street. Muslim villages were bombed by dive-bombers and French warships bombarded the towns from the gulf. While Radio Cairo reported tens of thousands of deaths, historians estimate that over six or eight thousand Algerians were killed. In France, the newspapers hardly mentioned the reprisals. Simone de Beauvoir said that very little was known about what happened in Sétif and Constantine. De Gaulle barely mentioned the massacre in his memoirs, even though the repression of the French army had been carried out under his coalition government with the strong support of his Communist ministers.

But in Algeria, the Sétif massacre was never forgotten and prepared the ground for the Algerian Revolution ten years later. An Algerian poet, Kateb Yacine, said, ‘I was sixteen years old. The shock which I felt at the pitiless butchery that caused the deaths of thousands of Muslims, I have never forgotten. From that moment, my nationalism took definite form.’



Kateb Yacine, autographing his novel, *Nedjma*, 1956 – Unknown author, Wikimedia

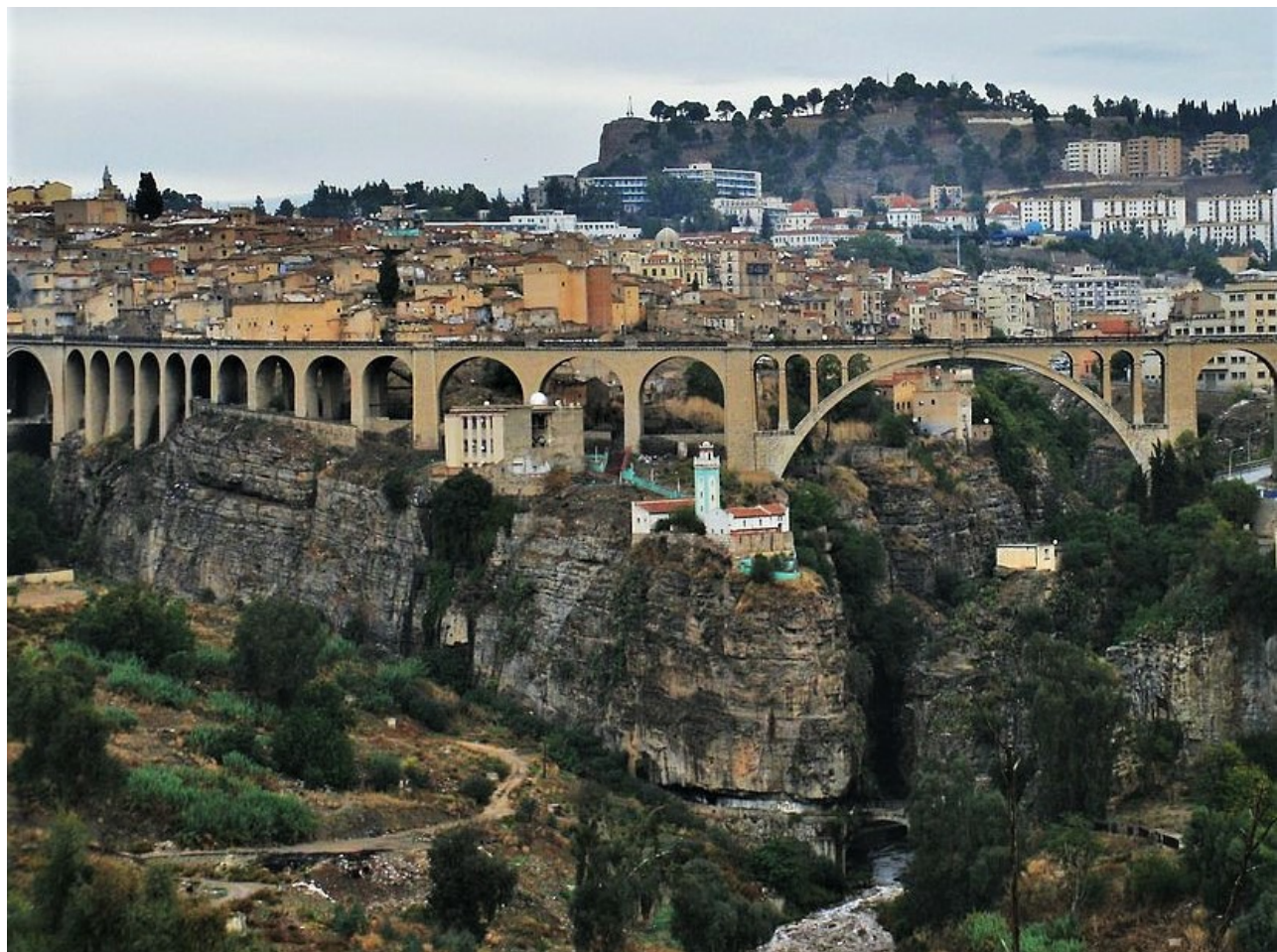


French army attacking in Kabyle, Algeria – Author, Marzolino, Shutterstock, Wikimedia. The people of Kabyle make up two-thirds of those who identify as Amazigh, or Berbers, a group of tribes that repelled the Arab invasion. Although they adopted Islam, unlike other Berber tribes, the fiercely independent Kabyle tribes, living by a code of hospitality and revenge, resisted Arab assimilation. Defeated during the 1830's French invasion and colonial settlement under a *régime du sabre*, government by sword, the Kabyle suffered the massacre of 1845 when the French set fires at the entrances to caves where the Kabyle were hiding, killing a thousand, including mothers with their children. During the first fifty years of French colonialism, it is estimated 2 million Algerians were killed.

On May 8, 1945, the day that Nazi Germany surrendered, 5,000 Algerians held a VE Day parade in Sétif to celebrate the victory for which many Algerian soldiers had given their life. When the gendarmes opened fire, the enraged marchers began killing French *pied noirs* during five days of pillaging, burning and murdering. The French army responded by a ferocious attack on the Kabyle of Setif, Guelma, and Constantine provinces, joined by the *pied noirs* who killed Algerians at random while the French air force and warships bombed the towns, killing six to eight thousand Algerians. The Sétif massacre was never forgotten. All the leaders of the FLN mark their dedication to the Algerian Revolution to the Sétif massacre on VE Day, 1945. Between 1954 and 1962, between 1 million and 1.5 million Algerians were killed and two million imprisoned in concentration camps. A critical part of the resistance, the Kabyle lost 10 percent of their population.



Bridge over the Gorge of Rummel, Constantine, Algeria – Author, Louadfel, Wikimedia



Sidi Rached Bridge. Constantine, Algeria – Author, Yelles, Wikimedia

It was not the first time the Algerians had suffered from mass extermination by the French army. Sétif, was a repeat of the 1849 siege of Zaatcha when Algerians rebelled against the increase of tax on date palms. The Berber sheikh Bouziane called for a holy war, but when a couple of battalions of Foreign Legion and African infantry attempted to take the fortress of Oasis Zaatcha, it was so well defended that l'Armée d'Afrique had to call in artillery reinforcements and several thousand Zouaves and Chasseurs. The Berber defense of Zaatcha was so fierce that the French lost 1,500 troops before breaching the walls. Faced with stubborn resistance by the Algerians and forced to take the town house by house with terrible losses, drunk with rage, the Zouaves executed over 10,000 unarmed villagers. Every person in Zaatcha was killed without exception, nothing was sacred, neither sex nor age. Children's heads were bashed against the wall in front of their mothers who begged for death themselves. General Herbillon ordered the execution of Sheikh Bouziane and his lieutenants and displayed their severed heads in the market place. The French army's massacre of the Algerians marked a turning point. Relations between the French and the Arabs would never be the same. The genocide of Zaatcha has never been admitted by the French. It is hard for a democracy to admit genocide because it represents a stain on the nation. But as Simone de Beauvoir has said, we are all responsible.



The Assault on Zaatcha by Colonel Canrobert, 1849 – Painting by Jean-Adolphe Beauce, Musée national du Château de Versailles, Wikimedia



Troops of the 7th Algerian Tirailleurs Regiment with their flag, 1917 – Author, R Merly, Public domain, Wikimedia



Troops from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco served in France – Unknown author, Public domain, Everett Historical



After fighting valiantly for France during World War Two, Algerian fighters, disillusioned with their lack of freedom in Algeria, became the backbone of the Front Liberation National insurgents in the French-Algerian War - Everett Historical

The Algérien Tirailleurs, a native unit distinguished for fighting the Nazis, returned to Algeria appalled by the carnage, many of the soldiers becoming leaders of the revolution, including Ahmed Ben Bella, the first president of Algeria, who wrote, ‘the horrors of the Constantine area in May 1945 succeeded in persuading me of the only path — Algeria for the Algerians.’ All the leaders of the FLN mark their dedication to the Algerian Revolution to the Sétif massacre on VE Day, 1945.

Under French occupation, Algeria had long been trying to establish a national identity in a land that for centuries had been a passageway for a series of conquerors: ruled by Carthaginians for seven centuries, followed by Romans then Byzantines, Arabs, Spaniards, Ottomans, and French. In all that time, Algeria had never been ruled by the Algerians. Franz Fanon, a theorist on colonialism and revolution, said in *The Wretched of the Earth*, that ‘decolonization is always a violent event.’ On All-Saint’s Day, *Toussaint Rouge*, 1954, nine and a half years after the Sétif massacre, the flame of independence burst forth from the smoldering embers and freedom fighters of the FLN, Front de libération nationale maquisards rose up against the French in the mountainous Aurès region in Eastern Algeria. The Aurès Mountains is where my childhood friend Yasmina’s family lived before they moved to Bethioua in Oran Province on the Mediterranean. The Berber Chaouias

of Aurès live in a wilderness never subjugated by the Romans, over the centuries keeping their own language and customs, living like Corsican bandits in rugged terrain ideal for guerrilla warfare. The goal of the Liberation Front's attack was to cut off all telephone lines from Aurès to the outside world, capture arms from the isolated gendarmerie garrisons, and create a revolutionary stronghold. The decision to attack on *Toussaint Rouge* was symbolic to the Algerians — strike at the very moment the French colonialists, *pieds-noirs* were commemorating the martyrs of Christendom, and secondly — strike when police preparedness would be minimal while the devout Catholics were celebrating the feast of the saints. Under the noses of the gendarmes, the Liberation Front recruited their first fighters, *djounoud*, set up training camps, smuggled firearms to assembly areas near points of insurrection while Zoubir Bouadjadj was creating a network of bomb factories. Due to inadequate training and lack of organization and discipline, the revolt had more failures than successes, giving the impression of being a series of isolated incidents which were quickly repressed by draconian measures. However, the indiscriminate imprisonment of innocent suspects served to convince many to join the revolution.



Chiefs of the Front Libération National. Standing, left to right, Rabah Bitat, Mostefa Ben Boulaid, Didouche Mourad, et Mohammed Boudiaf. Seated at left, Krim Belkacem, Larbi Ben M'Hidi at right – Unknown author, Ministère Algérien des Moudjahidine, Wikimedia



Délégation du Front Libération National, left to right, Taïeb Boulahrouf, Saâd Dahlab, Mohamed Seddik Benyahia, Krim Belkacem, Benmostefa Benaouda, Redha Malek, Lakhdar Bentobal, M'Hamed Yazid and Seghir Mostefai – Unknown author, EVIAN, Wikimedia

In France, the first haphazard FLN attacks didn't arouse intense concern, but Prime Minister Pierre Mendès France fiercely repudiated the idea that French policy in Algeria had any parallel between that of Tunisia or Morocco where he had supported independence. Backed by his Socialist Minister of the Interior, François Mitterrand, Mendès-France declared in the Assembly, 'One does not compromise when it comes to defending the internal peace of the nation.' *'L'Algérie, c'est La France.'* Mendès France was at heart a reformer. While he knew that the Algerians needed a better deal and in the long term, colonial rule would eventually have to end, he also realized that if his reform government were to survive, he had to make bellicose declarations on Algeria for an aggressive policy represented the political opinion of left, right, and center. If he negotiated with Algerian nationalists or proposed elections, the colonial lobby could bring his government down. Before reform could take place, order would need to be restored and that would lock the government into a program of repression. Attempting to prevent a violent rascist *ratissage* of the villages, Mitterrand prohibited promiscuous bombardments of napalm of the suspected rebel villages. But nevertheless, in the heat of combat, the hill villages, *douars*, suffered heavy aerial and artillery bombardment. In the rugged Aurès, General Cherrière's tanks and armored troop-carriers were limited to holding only the roads while the insurgents moved freely in the *maquis*. The *ratissage* and bombardment of villages was like using sledgehammers to kill wasps. Seeking a different approach, Mendès France appointed a new governor-general of Algeria, Jacques Soustelle, a brilliant ethnologist, an expert on Aztec and Mayan civilizations and de Gaulle's

chief of the Free French secret service with whom Papa worked during the war. Before Soustelle could even get to Algeria, Mendès-France's government fell due to his many enemies, abandonment by the Communists and the colonialist lobby. In the chamber, the defeated prime minister predicted, “. . . either there will be a policy of reconciliation, or a policy of repression and force — with all of its horrible consequences . . .”

In Algeria, moderates greeted Mendès-France's fall with despair while the Liberation Front greeted it with euphoria for they knew he was the sole leader who had promised liberal reform, the one thing that could bring about reconciliation and prevent full independence for Algeria. The question remains — if the communists and colonialists had not abandoned him, would have Mendès-France been vindicated? Could have a quarter of a million deaths been avoided? Could have his programs led to a slow movement towards independence as it has in Morocco and Tunisia? We will never know if there could have been a way we could have avoided tens of thousands of deaths.

Upon arriving in Algiers, Jacques Soustelle reassured the *pieds noirs* that his priority was to repress the revolt, then to carry out economic and social reforms. Arabic was to be made the official language in Muslim schools, the education budget doubled, agrarian reform and works to be undertaken to reduce the misery of the Algerian people. The most innovative of Soustelle's program was the creation of the S.A.S. corps like U.S. President Kennedy's Peace Corps, a volunteer civilian army created to use their skills to help underdeveloped nations. Called Kepis bleus because of their blue peaked hats, the corps were made up of squads of workers led by an officer versed in Arabic language and culture who lived in the hill villages with the common people to build houses and teach health and advanced farming techniques, a brave group of men respected by the local people, but targeted remorselessly by the Liberation Front and consequently suffered the highest mortality rate of any group in the war. Later, the army pressed the idealistic Kepis bleus into becoming intelligence centers where torture was used against suspected rebel sympathizers.

Upon Germaine Tillion's return to scout the Aurès region in 1955, Soustelle, asked her to join his cabinet to set up a network of centers of higher education for the urban Arabs and vocational training for rural people to help them to find employment in the cities. But Tillion's programs of assistance were doomed after the angry *colons* and the army forced Soustelle to employ the principle of “collective responsibility” which abandoned any pretense of Tillion's humanitarian concerns. If a soldier was shot, the suspected village was held responsible and destroyed by bombing, sometimes before it was evacuated. Catholic writer, Pierre-Henri Simon, who had spent five years in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp, says that “collective responsibility” was the

same principle that Hitler used to justify the massacre of Oradour-sur-Glane when after partisan attacks the whole village was executed by a battalion of the SS Panzer Division, *Das Reich*.

In anguish over the killing of his mentor, FLN leader Youssef Zighout issued a declaration, “To colonialism’s policy of collective repression, we must reply with collective reprisals against Europeans, who are all united behind the crimes committed upon our people. For them, no pity, no quarter!” Zighout believed it was the moment to turn a political conflict into an armed conflict by goading the police into searching Arab homes, arresting innocent people, instigating a mass persecution that would force the people to rise up and liquidate their oppressors. 20 August 1955, Youssef Zighout and Lakhdar Ben Tobbal unleashed a people’s revolt in the port city of Philippeville and around Constantine where sixty years before, Pierre Louÿs had written *Les Chansons de Bilitis*, erotic poems of lesbian love that a make believe archaeologist had uncovered in a tomb in Cyprus composed by the poet Bilitis, a Sapphic courtesan of ancient Greece.



Chansons de Bilitis by Pierre Louÿs, 1922 – Pochoir of George Barbier, Wikimedia

In Philippeville, a Mediterranean port with an enchanting Cote d'Azur ambience, Muslims poured into the streets, throwing grenades into the cafes, dragging European motorists from their cars and slashing them to death with knives and razors. In the village of Ain-Abid, Muslims who had been on friendly terms for years with the *pied noirs*, armed with pitchforks, axes, sickles, and knives went from house to house slitting throats, "The Kabyle smile" it was called. The slitting of throats, associated by the Algerians with the slaughter of sheep, *l'égorgement* was the most humiliating fate an enemy could suffer. The insurgents gang raped women, dashed infant's brains out against the wall, disemboweled mothers, leaving the village flowing in blood — Louÿs' eroticism of ancient Greece transformed into the necrophilia carnage of the present. In one house, the soldiers found a man killed in bed with his legs hacked off, his wife disemboweled, her baby slashed to death and stuffed into the cavity of her bowels. Arriving to find bodies littering the streets and shrieking Arab children ecstatically finishing off the dying, the *chasseurs parachutistes* opened fire shooting down all the Arabs, 'boukaks' they could find.

I am reading about the Philippeville massacre, *St Michael and the Dragon: A paratrooper in the Algerian War*. Published only this month, the government has confiscated the book due to its revelations of torture by the French Army. I had to get a copy with Emile's help because they were no longer in the bookstores. The author Pierre Leuliette served in Algeria for three years in a Bataillon des Parachutistes Coloniaux. Leuliette quotes a paratrooper on the Philippeville massacre, "We opened fire into the thick of them at random. Then as we moved on and found more bodies, our company commanders finally gave us the order to shoot down every Arab we met. . . . For two hours, all we heard was automatic rifles spitting fire into the crowd. The next morning, they lined the surviving prisoners in front of the machine guns and opened fire. There were so many of them that they had to be buried with bulldozers."

Although Soustell had previously banned extra-judicial killings, the government allowed the *pied-noirs* to form vigilante squads to execute Arabs. Thousands were killed. When he arrived at the scene, the thing that shocked Soustelle was that the atrocities were performed by Muslims who had been the fellow-workers of their victims. Looking at the mutilated men, women, and children, Soustelle was filled with rage, his liberal intentions destroyed. The terror had accomplished exactly what Youssef Zighout had intended — the greatest amount of hatred possible to militarize the revolution and convince Arabs to liquidate all the *pied-noirs*. As the French methods of repression became more ruthless, Germaine Tillion warned Governor-General Soustelle that it would only fan the fires of the rebellion they were trying to pacify.



Place de la republique, Algiers, Algeria, 1899 – Unknown author, U.S. Library of Congress, Wikimedia



Musicians in Tlemcen Algeria, - Painting by Bachir Yellès, Wikimedia



Harbor of Algiers, Algeria, 1921 – Publisher's Photo Service, Public domain, Wikimedia



Algiers - depot and station grounds of Algerian Railway, 1894 – Author, William Henry Jackson, U.S. Library of Congress, Wikimedia

The Philippeville massacre marked a turning point for Soustelle — a point of no return. From that time forward, crushing the revolt outweighed any hope of liberal programs of accommodation. The harsh vengeance of the French was a victory for the FLN. The army now saw all Muslims as terrorists. The brutal suppression was the beginning of many Algerians moving to support the FLN's war for independence.

After his release from prison, Ramdane Abane, a brilliant political thinker and organizer, was put in charge of reorganizing the FLN networks that had been destroyed. During his years in prison, Abane had studied everything he could get his hands on by Marx and Lenin, arriving at the conclusion that France had conquered Algeria by violence and only by violence could Algeria set itself free. A man with no material needs and driven by a burning obsession for Algerian freedom, Abane would seize it by any means. The Robespierre of the revolution, Abane believed in terror. Terror was the ultimate weapon. Despite his smiling face, Abane was violent and brutal like Stalin. He published the first FLN newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, clandestinely circulated through the Casbah, and established the Voix de l'Algérie radio transmission, turning the FLN into a mass movement, the transistor radio becoming an instrument of war. He issued a proclamation saying that the Liberation Front would be pitiless in the execution of traitors. Abane declared war on all French civilians and Muslims allied with the French regardless of age and sex.

François Mitterrand, Justice Minister during '56 and '57, approved the executions of 40 or 50 FLN rebels, recommending to President Rene Coty to reject clemency in most cases, an act which in later years he was to deeply regret. Once the French began guillotining leaders of the resistance, the war became uglier than ever, especially after the *pied-noirs* put pressure on Governor-General Robert Lacost to execute Zabane and Ferradj who was crippled. After they were guillotined in Barberousse prison, the Muslims understood beyond a shadow of a doubt, there would be no mercy from the French. When the water rushed underneath the front gates of Barberousse Prison, it told those who watched that the guillotine had been used. Ramdane Abane gave the order that for every guillotined member of the FLN, a hundred French would be indiscriminately assassinated. The head of the Algiers network, Saadi Yacef's squads began roaming the streets of Algiers shooting down civilians at random. In retaliation the *pied-noirs* counter-terrorists blew up a house on the rue de Thèbes in the Casbah, an explosion so enormous that it demolished the adjacent houses killing seventy Muslims including women and children. With Abane's blessing, Yacef began turning the labyrinth of the ancient Casbah into a fortress. An uncanny strategist, Yacef had talked his way out of Barberousse prison by offering to be a double agent, fooling the French before escaping into the depths of the densely populated Casbah where one



French colonial guillotine – Shutterstock

square kilometer of ground sheltered 100,000 Muslims, a labyrinth of winding streets so narrow that Yacef could leap across the street from one rooftop to the next. After purging the Casbah of disloyal elements, where the eyes and ears of the FLN were everywhere, Yacef had the masons of the Casbah build a rabbit's warren of secret passages leading from one house to another much like the *traboules* of Lyon, underground passages where the Resistance leaders, Jean Moulin and Charles Delestraint fooled the Gestapo by entering one house to travel through the *traboules* to exit from another house. Within the maze of passageways cleverly concealed behind false walls, Yacef set up bomb factories and weapon arsenals, hiding his assailants, including the assassin Ali la Pointe.

After the devastation of *pied-noirs* terrorists bombing of rue de Thèbes, Yacef organized a terrorist crew of more than 1,000, including attractive young women, a cunning move as Muslim women had not been used as assassins before. Yacef told his girls that they were avenging the deaths of the Muslim children in the bombing of rue de Thèbes. Since Muslim women were not yet body searched at the police check points, Yacef's girls chosen for their beauty and European looks would be able to pass where men could not. Djamila Bouhired, Zohra Drif, and Samia Lakhdari prepared for the bombing of a brasserie and café in the European quarter by removing their veils, tinting their hair, wearing bright summer dresses and makeup, carrying in their beach bags a bomb weighing a kilogram concealed beneath towels, sun tan lotion, and swimsuits.



Young women bombers of the National Liberation Front, left to right, Samia Lakhdari, Zohra Drif, Djamila Bouhired, Hassiba Bent-Bouali – Unknown author, *La vraie bataille d'Alger*, Jacques Massu, Wikimedia



Zohra Drif, 20-years old, during her arrest by the French. one of four young women who planted bombs in cafes under the direction of FLN leader Yacef Saadi – Author, Saber 68, Ministère Algérien des Moudjahidine, Wikimedia. Zohra’s bomb in the Milk Bar Café, killed 3 and wounded 60 women and children, some requiring amputations. Yacef Saadi, chef de la Zone autonome d’Alger and Zohra Drif were captured 30 September 1957 by the 1st Foreign Parachute Regiment. Drif was sentenced to 20 years of hard labor by the military tribunal for terrorism. During her five years of imprisonment, she continued her legal studies, focusing on capital punishment. Upon Algeria being granted independence in 1962, Drif was pardoned by President Charles de Gaulle. Viewed as a heroine by the Algerian people, Zohra Drif became a lawyer and politician, one of the first women elected to the Algerian Council of the Nations, eventually becoming the Vice President.

Zohrah Drif’s target was the Milk-Bar, across from Salan’s military headquarters. Samia Lakhdari’s target was the Cafétéria on stylish rue Michelet, popular with the European students. While Djamila Bouhired’s bomb left in the office of Air France failed to go off, the carnage at the Milk-Bar and the Cafétéria was awful, splinters of glass and wood killing many and wounding dozens of women and children, some requiring amputation of limbs. Yacef sent more girl bombers, Djamila Bouazza to the brasserie Coq-Hardi, and Danièle Minne to the student bar Otomatic and a couple weeks later, sent Djouher Akhror and Baya Hocine, girls of sixteen and seventeen to set off bombs in stadiums.



Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne placed a bomb in the Otomatic which seriously injured a young girl and several others – Unknown author, Wikimedia. After being freed from prison upon Algerian independence in 1962, Minne wrote a PhD dissertation based on her interviews of women insurgents in the Algerian War, published as *Des femmes dans la guerre d'Algérie*, Karthala, Paris, and later, the basis for the film *Algeria: Women at War*. Ultimately, she became professor of history and feminist studies at the University of Toulouse.

Recruiting the attractive seventeen-year-old Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne as a bomber for the FLN was a coup for Yacef, because she was of French nationality, the step-daughter of a Communist. Because of their link to Fernand Iveton who was the only French *pied-noir* guillotined in the revolt for being a FLN operative, Danièle's mother and step-father were condemned to death, but Simone de Beauvoir waged a campaign and finally succeeded in saving their lives. To expand the reign of terror, Yacef directed Ali la Pointe to assassinate Amédée Froger, President of the Federation of Mayors of Algeria. Ali la Pointe, a former petty criminal and pimp in the Casbah, uneducated in school but well educated in the underworld of the thieves, drug dealers, and whores of the Casbah, was trained to be Yacef's most loyal and lethal assassin. A bomb explosion before the funeral sent the *pied-noirs* into a frenzy of killing, indiscriminately lynching Arabs, smashing in the heads of veiled women with iron bars — provoking the exact reaction which Yacef had planned, a gruesome wave of killing that would alienate the Arabs from the French.

Unable to contain the bombings with his gendarmes, Governor-General Lacost requested the new Commander Salan and paratroop commander General Jacques Massu, to take complete civilian control.

A graduate of St. Cyr, who had fought with General Leclerc from the Lake Chad march to the Liberation of Paris, Massu moved four crack paratrooper regiments into Algiers, set up a system of *quadrillage* dividing the city zones under a regimental command, the Casbah placed under the command of the relentless Colonel Bigeard who set up check points at all entrances to the Casbah, took over the police dossiers on suspected FLN, began house to house searches, arrested hundreds without judicial warrants and put hundreds into prison to extract information on Yacef's cells through the use of severe torture. The Battle of Algiers had begun.

Director of intelligence, Colonel Yves Godard's Deuxième Bureau, set up an organizational chart on the Casbah FLN command filling in the blanks as information was forced out of the Arabs by extreme cruelty. An expert on subversive warfare, Colonel Roger Trinquier, under the *quadrillage* system, divided the city into small sectors with each block and building marked by a number with Muslim block-wardens appointed to report any suspicious activity so that it was impossible for a Muslim to enter into the European quarter without being reported — a similar system under which the French lived under the Gestapo. Thousands of Muslims were arrested and tortured at night so that insurgents could be seized before the curfew was lifted at dawn.

French interrogators were fond of using the *gégène*, a hand operated electric generator whose electrodes were fastened to parts of the body, most usually the penis and the victim zapped with a high current of electricity. Armed with the results of the interrogations, Colonel Bigeard's paratroopers landed on the roofs of the Casbah in helicopters loaned by the Americans and seized Yacef's bomb factory in the Impasse de la Grenade, confiscating seventy kilos of explosives and thousands of detonators, driving Saadi Yacef to ground.

Through Massu's paratrooper's use of torture, Yacef's laboriously assembled organization had been destroyed, but concealed in the Casbah, he planned a bombing of the casino on the beach where *pied-noirs* flirted and danced, laughed and wagered on the gambling tables. A bomb placed under the bandstand exploded with terrific force splattering the casino with blood, disemboweling the band leader and blowing the legs off the *chanteuse*. An eighteen-year-old dancer had her feet blown off, fragments of her feet still clinging to her golden slippers. Enraged *pied-noirs* spilled into the streets of Algiers, beginning the worst *ratonnade* ever, wreaking and burning Muslim shops, killing Arabs with meat-hooks and knives while the police and soldiers did little to stop the killing. After the bombing of the Casino, Massu's paratroopers had one goal — get Yacef at any cost.

Djamila Bouhired, Yacef's closest associate and perhaps his lover, was arrested and tortured, but refused to give Yacef up. Upon returning to Algeria, Tillion discovered how common the torture and executions had become. Yacef sent an intermediary to bring her meet him secretly in the Casbah. When Tillion accused Yacef of being an assassin, he said he had no other choice. With tears in his eyes, he told her that disguised as a woman, he had visited the Casino after the bombing and discovered that one of the slain was an old friend with whom he'd once played football. The friend's fiancée had both her legs ripped off. Yacef proposed a deal to Tillion. If she could persuade the government to stop guillotining Algerian patriots, then he would halt the bombing. She flew back to Paris to plead with the government to take up Yacef's proposal, but they didn't act upon her plea. On her return to Algeria, the army announced new executions of FLN members, the very thing that would bring on a new series of bombings. In an exchange of letters with Tillion, Yacef told her that if the army executed his beloved Djamila, the reaction of the FLN would be very violent. Realizing that she could do nothing more to end the cycle of bombings and executions, Tillion returned to Paris broken hearted. The hysterical hatred between the Arabs and French had become so bitter that no solution was possible.



Mentored by Yacef Saadi, a gangster in the Casbah, Ali la Pointe became the assassin for the FLN – Unknown author, Wikimedia

After Tillion's departure, French intelligence picked up Yacef's courier and broke him with torture. The paratroopers descended upon the Casbah and captured Yacef concealed behind a false brick wall. Within two weeks, Ali la Pointe was turned in by an informant into intelligence's Deuxième Bureau.



The Casbah of Algiers, 1900 – Author, Viollet, Public domain, Wikimedia

The paratroopers surrounded the building and blew up the masonry wall behind which la Pointe was hiding, the bomb setting off an explosion of the rebel's arsenal of bombs, an explosion so vast that it shook the entire Casbah, killing the Arab children who had not been evacuated from surrounding houses. With the capture of Yacef Saadi and death of Ali la Pointe, General Raoul Salan and paratrooper commander Jacques Massu exulted. Torture had succeeded. The Battle of Algiers had been won.

But had it? The war went on. The FLN withdrew across the frontier to a sanctuary in Tunis to continue the battle for another four years, waging war not only on the field of battle but in the United Nations Assembly and around the world.

I have discovered that not only was torture used against the insurgents, but against the French citizens who oppose the Algerian War. Henri Alleg's book, *La Question*, published in 1958 brought the use of torture out of the shadows. A French Jew in Algeria, Alleg was the publisher of the leftist *Alger républicain*. General Massu's paratroopers arrested Alleg for associating with Maurice Audin, a communist who supported the Algerian Revolution who after being tortured, Emile tells me, was executed by strangulation. Alleg wrote *La Question* in the Barberousse prison of Algiers and smuggled it out bit by bit. When it was published, it hit like a thunderbolt, selling 60,000 in a couple of weeks before being seized by the Military Tribunal of Paris for demoralizing the army and weakening national defense. Although the police agents destroyed all the copies of *La Question* they could get their hands on, there remained 60,000 copies circulating underground. Alleg said, «*En attaquant les Français corrompus, c'est la France que je défends.*» "By attacking corrupt Frenchmen, it is France that I am defending."

When Alleg refused to rat on his comrades, they tortured him by *le gégène* which sent electric currents through his body in sharp lightening like stabs, then came slower electric thrusts penetrating deeply into his muscles, into the very marrow of his bones, the surge of electricity creating spasms making him feel like his body was being ripped in two. When the electrodes were placed in his mouth, his jaws were soldered to the electrode by a current seizing his jaw so he couldn't open his mouth while luminous patterns of fire tore through his head. Next came the torture by drowning. The rag around his head was soaked, water flowing into his mouth and nose so that he couldn't breathe. "I had the impression of drowning, and a terrible agony that of death itself, took possession of me."

Much of the torture was degrading with sexual overtones, victims stripped naked, bottles thrust into the vaginas of young Muslim women, high water pressure forced into rectums. Compelled to participate in the torture, paratrooper Pierre Leulliette was tormented by the screams of the victims coming through the walls sounding like caged animals being gradually put to death. Leulliette's descriptions of the dying victims reminds me of images of Dutch painter, Hieronymus Bosch's macabre depictions of hell in the *Garden of Earthly Delight* where naked sinners suffer the torments of eternal damnation. Alleg's book shows torture as business as usual — pointless violence, institutionalized evil, the torturers finding it quite normal without thinking that anyone could be innocent. The Arabs were all guilty. After enduring all the pain they could stand, they would spill their guts, then most would die.



Lingchi, execution by slow slicing, Beijing, early 20th Century – Author, Agence Rol, Wikimedia

***The wish to hurt, the momentary intoxication with pain, is the loophole
through which the pervert climbs into the minds of ordinary men.***

— Jacob Bronowski

In the preface to *La Question*, Sartre writes: “The French are discovering the terrible truth . . . if fifteen years are enough to transform victims into executioners, then its behavior is not more than a matter of opportunity. Anybody, at any time, may equally find himself victim or executioner.” The enigma is how ordinary men can inflict pain on others. Mathematician, historian, and poet, Jacob Bronowski believes, “The wish to hurt, the momentary intoxication with pain, is the loophole through which the pervert climbs into the minds of ordinary men.”

Many of the paratroopers sent to Algeria to protect the French colonists, had been fighting for more than ten years in colonial wars. Some of the troops of the French Foreign Legion were German veterans from the Eastern Front in World War Two where so many SS Waffen atrocities occurred. The leaders of the Algerian counterinsurgency effort had seen hard combat with the Viet Minh in Indochina. They had developed their techniques on the Indochinese, a determined enemy which had conditioned their methods of suppression. Emile Charreau, who has clandestine contacts within the Direction General de la Sécurité Extérieure, has sent mountains of research papers, including his recent article on torture published in *Le Temps Modern* on the *Mains Rouges*, a secret operation of DGSE, the French death squad, *l'Escadrons de la Mort* which exterminates fighters for Algerian independence. One technique of extermination was the death flights where revolutionary leaders were dropped from helicopters to their death in the sea. Under orders from General Jacques Massu, Paul Aussaresses set up an interrogation center and served as prime executioner during the Battle of Algiers.

Several years ago, Yvonne had given me Catholic author, Pierre-Henri Simon’s *Contre La Torture* which tells of French soldiers interrogating Arabs by suspending them naked from the ceiling and attaching electrodes to their sexual organs. Simon who had spent five years in Nazi prisoner-of-war camps said the French policy of “collective responsibility” was ‘exactly the same principle by which Hitler’s men justified the massacre of the village of Oradour-sur-Glane where over 600 were massacred by a battalion of the Nazi Das Reich. After freed from the POW camp, Simon visited the death camp of Belson and exclaimed. “May the good people of France never fall into such moral degradation.” But that is exactly where the French have gone.

Although he was in charge of extra-judicial killing of leaders of the Front Liberation Nationale, Paul Aussaresses has not been prosecuted for his crimes. Emile has told me that he has learned from contacts within French intelligence services that Aussaresses has been appointed military attaché for the French embassy in Washington DC, to teach techniques he developed in the Battle of Algiers to a U.S. Special Forces group in

North Carolina. Emile believes that the techniques of the Algerian War will be used by the United States in supporting military repression in South America.

Emile says the use of torture is the classic case of the desirable ends justifying the means. Aussaresses tortured and murdered for France with the same conviction as the Spanish Inquisition tortured and murdered for God. Aussaresses and the French military believe they were the victors of the Battle of the Algiers because they wiped out the FLN terrorist network. That was their mission and the paratroopers accomplished it. While I will admit that the French have won the Battle of Algiers using extreme torture, will it succeed in winning the war? In Camus' powerful essay he said, "Torture has perhaps saved some at the expense of honor by uncovering thirty bombs, but at the same time it has created fifty new terrorists who operating in some other way and in another place, would cause the death of even more innocent people."

I requested a meeting with Heinrich Hölderin Hollenzoller, my professor of ethics, to discuss the question of torture. He told me that in the early 17th century, Friedrich Spee, a Jesuit professor and poet, opposed torture. It was a time when the burning of witches was common in the Holy Roman Empire, sweeping up nobility and clergy as well as commoners. It resulted in the mass executions of hundreds of people during the Thirty Years War — the bloody struggle between the Hapsburgs of Austria and Spain and the Bourbons of France. Armies of that time were funded by the right of the troops to pillage the towns and countryside, a policy which generated hordes of warrior thieves. Warfare over thirty years claimed the lives of 8,000,000 people and three hundred years later prepared the way for the First World War. In several German principalities, over one half of the young men were killed. Suffering from drought, famines, and plagues, the people looked for a reason for their misery and seized upon witchcraft. The great crop failures caused by the expansion of glaciers in the Little Ice Age during the 17th and 18th centuries, witches were held responsible, setting off orgies of witch-hunting. In one small town alone, over 200 men, women and children were burned to death. During the years of war, a fearful hysteria swept over Europe, an obsession with witchcraft which claimed thousands of victims.

Friedrich Spee wrote a book, *Cautio Criminalis*, which urged new Imperial laws to assure a legal defense for anyone accused of witchcraft. Spee said refusing to confess to being a witch was not evidence of witchcraft. He was horrified by the use of the rack, a process where a man is stretched on a frame with rollers at each end to which his feet and hands are tied, the rollers then turned to put the victim under ever greater

tension until his joints are dislocated, stretching his muscles and tendons, making cracking sounds as cartilage, ligament and bones snap. If anyone survives they'll never walk again. Spee said forcing confessions by torture was a spiraling descent into hell. Torture victims were forced to denounce their accomplices, who were then brought in to be tortured to name more accomplices and so on until the whole town was accused of witchcraft. Everyone would be guilty. All of the people in the town would burn. If Spee's reforms had been adopted, it would have stopped the burning of witches, but no one was listening. Witches continued to be burned at the same moment René Descartes was inventing modern philosophy. It has been 300 years since the Jesuit priest condemned torture and yet nations are still torturing their enemies. Spee, who survived an attempted assassination and died of an infection while caring for the wounded during the siege of Trier, was the first writer to say torture doesn't lead to the truth. It makes the innocent confess to anything to stop the pain.



Friedrich Spee, Jesuit professor and poet – Unknown author, Wikimedia

Emile sent me a reprint of a document from First Marine Division Intelligence Section, San Francisco, 1943, entitled, "Suggestions for Japanese Interpreters Based On Work In The Field," written by Sherwood F. Moran, Major, USMC who interrogated Japanese prisoners captured in combat in the Battle of Guadalcanal.

Major Moran wrote, “I consider a prisoner . . . as out of the war, out of the picture, and thus, in a way, not an enemy . . . The first and most important step in interrogation is for the interviewer to get into the mind and the heart of the prisoner.” You have to make him comfortable. If he is wounded, talk about his wounds. Show sympathy and encourage his understanding that you are a fellow warrior. Even though he was dropping bombs on you yesterday. Today he is no longer the enemy.”

After studying torture in Algeria, I am convinced that the intelligence operatives of France and the United States, must train their interrogators in more subtle techniques. Interrogation requires exceptional psychological skills. After gaining the confidence of the prisoner the major would segue into questions like, “When did you arrive at Guadalcanal? Where did you land? How many troops landed with you? What are the armaments on your ship?” Moran uses storytelling and psychology to involve his subject. He says to the prisoner: “We know how skillful and brave the Japanese armies are. You have conquered the Philippines and Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore. Your success has been extraordinary. But you were annihilated at Guadalcanal. Why is that?”

Major Moran says that it’s like telling a story. You encourage him to tell his part in it. It is much better than beating them with a stick. If you wish to acquire critical information from captured men, you must understand their culture. If you have no intimate feeling for their language and the culture, then you are lost. Intelligence officers must overcome fear and touch the prisoner’s spirit. An interrogator is priest and entertainer, warrior and anthropologist. Emile said that an American G.I. who survived the Bataan Death March told him that no matter how cruel the atrocities of the Japanese were, the Americans treated the Japanese as human beings during captivity. The intelligence major said that maintaining that attitude was the difference in being an American. In the heat of battle, atrocities are common, but once under guard at a POW camp, there is no excuse for failing to observe the Geneva Conventions.

I looked up the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, October 21, 1950. In my paper, I summarize the provisions of Article 3:

Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth, or wealth, or any other similar criteria. To this end the following acts are

and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever: Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture; Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment.

Torture is used to extract confessions, to terrorize friends and family of the victim. As the Jesuit professor Friedrich Spee said centuries ago, false confessions ensue from torture. The person being interrogated may have zero knowledge of the information being sought. Torture leads to false information. Torture leaves the door open for bullies and sadist to indulge their fantasies. Torture encourages revenge and sadism produces bent souls. Nearly two hundred nations have ratified the Geneva international law for the humane treatment of prisoners. Humiliating and degrading one's captives corrodes the soul. The Nazis and the Soviets failed to respect the rights of prisoners. Do we want to become the same as them?



Cautio Criminalis – Author, Friedrich Spee, Wikimedia. *Cautio Criminalis* argued that alleged witches should be represented by a lawyer and have a legal defense. Since every person tortured is forced to denounce others, it is possible that the trials will not end until everyone in town has been burned. Over time, Spee's *Catio Criminalis* did much to abolish witch-burning.

The secretary-general of the Algiers Prefecture Paul Teitgen, responsible for overseeing the police, was tormented by the paratrooper torture. Teitgen, a Catholic and hero of the Résistance, had been arrested by the Gestapo and tortured on nine occasions at Dachau. Once civilian control was given to Massu, Teitgen was powerless to stop the same techniques that he had suffered in the Gestapo chambers. By this time 3,000 Arabs had simply disappeared. Teitgen resigned from the police saying that for the past three months “we have been engaged in war crimes.” France was losing its soul. After dwelling on the tragedy of the war, I wonder if there were ever a point at which France could have avoided the debacle of the war. Maybe there had been a glimmer of a chance before Mendès-France’s government fell in 1955. After the fall of Mendès-France, Germaine Tillion’s hope for reforms to gain support of the Muslim moderates vanished. There remained a vast discrepancy in wealth and land — nine-tenths belong to the French and one-tenth to the Algerians. There remained, the violent deaths, the poison of hatred spreading in an ever-widening circle each year.

I’m writing about an astounding development this week. Back in power, de Gaulle has proposed a referendum on the self-determination of the Algerian people. But the army is deluded that they are winning the war. Sixteen generals have addressed a letter to the French people, urging them to support them in stopping the extension of “Soviet influence in the Mediterranean.” General Raoul Salan’s Organisation de l’armée secrète has mounted a terrorist campaign of bombing and assassination. The Generals believe de Gaulle has deceived them. They were the ones who brought de Gaulle back to power — and now he has betrayed the army and France.

Yesterday, the vote on the referendum was announced — people have approved de Gaulle’s proposal by an overwhelming seventy-five percent. My conclusion is that what the French government failed to understand for so many years was that the brutal tactics of the counter insurgency operations played a key role in the eventual French defeat. It only inspired the FLN to show no mercy in the killing of French soldiers and *pied-noirs*. A blood bath of the French begat a blood bath on the part of the Arab resistance. As FLN leader Yacef Saâdi understood, when the French killed someone, they had a brother, a cousin, an uncle who would become radicalized and join the revolution. When you torture and debase someone, you are creating a recruitment advertisement for your adversary. The repression by torture and murder changed the minds of the Muslim population, some of whom would have preferred to remain a part of France. In the beginning of the war, less than half of the Algerians supported the FLN resistance, but due the French repression, within a short time, a

vast majority of the people supported the revolution. Rahman Bab, the Pashtun poet of Pakistan, revered by the Sufi masters said, “We are all one body. Whoever tortures another, wounds himself.”

Will France repudiate the use of torture? That is my question. When you torture, you open the door to even more cruelty in your enemy. The level of brutality escalates. The use of torture and execution to crush the rebellion only increased the Algerians’ desire for freedom. While the brutal tactics of the paratroopers won the Battle of Algiers, it was a Pyrrhic victory. I believe that in the end, by relying on execution and torture, the Algerian War is lost. As Camus said, “Each of us has the plague in him.”

Before her death, Yvonne dedicated herself to exposing the use of torture in Algeria. As she often said, “There is no excuse to remain silent.” I have inherited from my sister the commitment to engage the critical issues of our time. Yvonne rethought everything from several angles. Nothing was taken for granted — including tradition. She encouraged me to be the person who breaks the mold, who goes beyond. I bring that same perspective to dance. The cerebral side of me desires to choreograph, to tell a story, to create an emotion. It is the physical side of me that expresses that emotion in dance. When on stage, I come alive.

It's terrible when you have two talents and must choose between them. If you try to follow two muses at once, you end up dividing your efforts and risk failure. But to be the person I want to be, I risk failure each day by writing and choreographing in my room. Sometimes I’m in despair. I struggle to maintain discipline. With my sister gone, without Gio, there are so many times when my heart isn't in it. When your heart is aching, it's hard to maintain your optimism. At night, dreams torment me. Yvonne was the one who kept me from being afraid of failing. Now I'm full of fear — afraid I'll fail at school, afraid that I'll fail as a dancer — afraid I'll be alone forever.

I'm haunted by guilt. If I'd not loved Gio from the first time I saw him, then Yvonne would not have died. Her death has ripped Gio out of my life at the same time her death has left me bonded to him. That first night we saw Gio in the rain, if I hadn't insisted on going back for him wouldn't she still be alive? It's a question no one can answer.

By the end of August, heavy rains began to fall. I still hadn't heard from Gio. It casts a pall over my life. For the first time, I am losing hope. I spend most of my time alone, taking long walks along the river near flood

stage, watching the water creeping up the banks. The danger of walking there makes me feel alive again for I'm dying from the inside out. I'm drawn to flooding rivers. The swift current of the river hypnotizes. The danger awakens my senses. It's the incomprehensible force that took Yvonne's life.

My loneliness is hard to bear. Boys are interested, but I'm not. It's my self-imposed exile. Despite my denial, my skin hungers for a caress. At night I touch myself, the silken caresses for which I long.

Last week Roger invited me for dinner at a restaurant in the country. He'd brought from his cellar, a 1947 Richebourg. I love good food, but four-star restaurants and rare wines are not what I'm looking for in life. Roger never steps beyond the boundaries of his gilded world. He can't see the perspective of the working poor. I think of Gio who has no pretensions of class. Gio said, "First of all, I play for myself. Secondly, I play for the other musicians. After that, I play for the audience." That's what mattered to Giovanni — playing for himself. He was obsessed by his craft. That's why I loved him. He would live and die for his music.

As we entered the restaurant, a band was playing, couples dancing on the terrace overlooking the river. As the shadows descended upon the purple sheen of the current, the waiters lit the candles in the lanterns, the band playing songs by Benny Goodman and Charles Aznavour, Cole Porter and Duke Ellington.



Rich Niewiroski Jr.

I was struck by the gaiety of the crowd. Perhaps it was due to the breeze blowing off the river on a warm summer's night. Suddenly elation seized me, making me feel like I wanted to fly. The band began "Begin the Beguine." It was Latin. I had to dance.

I took Roger out on the floor.

As we were returning to our table, a man asked me to dance, and after him another, then another. The last one was professional. People stopped to watch us dance. Roger had never seen this abandon in me before. Watching me dance with others, jealousy increased his desire. When I returned, he kissed my bare shoulder.

"Please don't," I said.

We drove back in silence, his Facel Vega careening around the turns.

"Slow down, or I'm getting out."

He slowed, not speaking a word on the way back, his face like broken concrete. I can't be around someone who desires me. I must have a phobia of men.