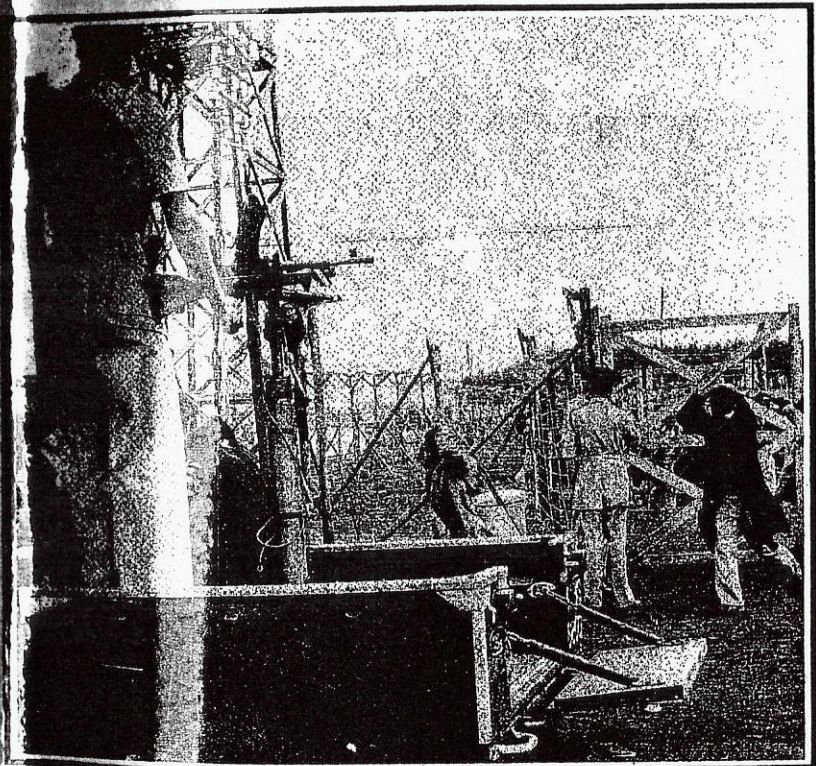


*Themes in
Comparative
History*

European Decolonization 1918-1981

An Introductory
Survey

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imperialist rhetoric) and internationally (above all, the Soviet Union). This proved to be a gross miscalculation of what such alternative patrons had to offer in the late 1950s, but such illusions were rife before the Congo crisis in the early 1960s revealed the limits of Soviet interest in African affairs. Sekou Touré's gambit was to prove disastrous for the economy of Guinea, since the French Government rigorously applied its threat to cut off all forms of assistance. But it nevertheless served to highlight the fact that the constitutional realities within the new-mint Community afforded something much less than substantive political (let alone economic) independence.

Guinea's bankrupt fate is ironic in so far as within two years de Gaulle changed his West African stance once again, this time offering untrammelled independence without financial penalty; indeed, France's increasingly powerful position within the Common Market in Europe meant that she was in a position to direct a growing volume of aid to this region. This turnaround in metropolitan policy between 1958 and 1960 is partly attributable to local factors. Guinean independence, for example, made it hard for African leaders in the Ivory Coast and Senegal to fend off criticisms that they were Gaullist stooges. Even Houphouët-Boigny, who liked nothing better than serving as a minister of metropolitan France, ultimately had to recognize that his political credibility at home hinged on ending the ambiguities of the Ivory Coast's position vis-à-vis the old metropole. Furthermore, de Gaulle must have been conscious that, as Nigeria was brought to the point of independence in 1960, it was the ex-British colonies in West Africa who seemed more than ever likely to acquire the political and economic leadership of the region, unless something was done to alter the image of the Francophone territories. However, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, whatever force may be ascribed to these considerations, by 1960 French decisions south of the Sahara were really a reflection of developments in Algeria, and that de Gaulle was resolving the minor issues of West Africa before facing up to the larger challenge of cutting short the bitter civil war in the North. It is to these Algerian dilemmas that we must shortly turn.

Before doing so, however, mention must be made of the effect which the conclusion of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, and the early phases in the history of the EEC, had on French orientations. One of the crucial attractions for France of the EEC experiment, helping to

offset the manifest risks involved, had from the start been the prospect of involving German (and Benelux) capital in the development of the overseas franc zone on terms which continued to favour French trade. In the first six years of the EEC's existence, before any fully fledged Common Agricultural Policy came into operation, it was all the more vital for France to extract benefits from the association in this way. Certainly de Gaulle proved ready to stretch German and Dutch patience to the limit in demanding exclusive preferences for French colonies and ex-colonies within the EEC regime. Thus it was often said at the time that the EEC's formation essentially represented a deal between French agriculture and German industry; here was one way, however, that de Gaulle could show French manufacturers that there was something in it for them as well. But for de Gaulle power-politics was the root of all action, and this consideration was probably paramount. One of the objectives of his strategy, therefore, was to switch the economic leadership in West African development from the Anglophone to the Francophone countries, so that France consistently undermined any separate EEC agreement with Nigeria. Indeed, de Gaulle and his successors were remarkably successful in entrenching a privileged position for the franc zone within the trading arrangements of the EEC which continues to this day - with big spin-offs for French contractors. Therefore, by reinforcing French confidence about the solidity of their economic links with parts of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, the shaping of the EEC after 1957 greatly eased the management of decolonization. But even more significant than this was the growing confidence in Paris by 1960 that France was in a position to determine the course of west European affairs. The euphoria this produced was understandable; after all, no French leadership had been in this position for a century or more. The steeling of French official nerves when faced with the climax of the most severe of all their decolonization challenges, that of the Algerian war, was of enormous importance, since without it events might have taken a radically different course.

II ALGERIA: THE ROAD TO EVIAN

In July 1954 the French Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès-France, had (as we saw earlier) severed the French entanglements in Indo-China.

In large part, this decision reflected a new determination in Paris to concentrate metropolitan resources on resuscitating French power in Europe. The rapid recovery of Western Germany after 1947 lay behind this shift of priorities; certainly it made the exhaustion of French *matériel* and manpower in the paddy-fields of east Asia appear as a comedy of strategic errors. It was, therefore, an ironic piece of misfortune that, immediately after this withdrawal from Asia, a nationalist rebellion broke out in Algeria on 1 November 1954. The war in North Africa was to last for eight years; in fighting it the French exchequer did not, as in the latter part of the Indo-Chinese conflict, benefit from American subsidies, and among its political ramifications was to be the collapse of the French Fourth Republic. It was not until mid-1962 that Pierre Mendès-France's vision of France freed from colonial burdens and able to devote her national energies to internal renovation came at last within grasp; ironically, by 1962 this grasp was not to be that of Mendès-France's left-radicalism, but of a rampant Gaullist conservatism. How had this come about?

Algeria was always accorded a special place in French colonial thinking because of its proximity to the European mainland.⁸ This was also true, logically enough, of France's other North African dependencies in Tunisia and Morocco. But although the issue of decolonization in these latter two instances did contribute to the fractures of metropolitan politics in the early 1950s, and on occasions helped to bring down governments, the reverberations were limited: Tunisia and Morocco both became self-governing states in March 1956.⁹ Algeria was different because of the presence of one million white settlers (mostly French, but also including large Italian and Maltese segments) who were known locally as *pieds noirs*. These Europeans had been established in Algeria since the late 1870s, when the wine-making industry had boomed; as such, this settler society was rooted in place even more firmly than comparable British communities in, say, Kenya or Rhodesia. The *pieds noirs* were also distinctive in that they included a significant working-class and petit-bourgeois element which, particularly in the Bab el Oued section of Algiers, lived intermixed, if not intermarried, with the Arab majority. Such groups did not have skills or capital to afford them likely alternatives to their Algerian existence; it was inevitable that they would fight to the last suitcase to retain their privileges if any threat emerged to the status quo.

The basic causes of Algerian-Arab discontents which climaxed in

the outbreak of November 1954 will not be outlined here, since they were fundamentally the same as in other colonial situations: a growing population, stagnant agriculture, a flow of migrants to the towns with consequent unemployment, and a wartime cadre of school-educated *indigènes* whose aspirations were suddenly pinched and maimed by post-war realities. In 1945 an attempted nationalist coup centred on the village of Setif was crushed with several thousand fatal casualties (the exact numbers being hotly disputed), many of them the result of an indiscriminate 'pacification' by the French forces.¹⁰ The Setif massacres scarred Franco-Algerian understanding, and probably swung the odds, even at this early stage, against any ordered transition to majority self-government. This was precisely the period, however, when French governments were keen to construct at least the façade of liberal constitutionalism in their colonial possessions; they could hardly do otherwise when the British were serenading themselves out of India with such aplomb. Thus a new Algerian constitution was drawn up in 1947 granting greater civil and religious liberties to Arabs. But this legislation required a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly in Paris, which was never forthcoming. There was probably no significant colonial entity whose internal problems received *less* intelligent and sensitive analysis than French Algeria in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

There were two forces which blocked any rational policy-making on Algerian questions.¹¹ The first of these was the power of the settler (or *colon*) lobby. Thus, unlike in the British case, these expatriates were directly represented in the French parliamentary system, and did not have to rely on spokesmen whose actual commitment to their cause might break under pressure. But *colon* opportunism was also assisted by the special character of Fourth Republic politics, fragmented as it was into a multiplicity of parties and factions so that no coalition lasted very long before its pieces were rearranged in some new, unstable order. This legislative charade has been described as 'mutual neutralization';¹² no Prime Minister was ever in a position to develop constructive solutions to political problems because of the welter of contradictory commitments made in the course of coalition-making. Under certain circumstances the necessities of national power raised this road-block. Thus in 1954 inter-group rivalries were put into suspended animation while Mendès-France dirtied his hands negotiating peace in Indo-China, but they snapped back into place once the surgery was completed. Such exceptions apart, any parlia-

mentary interest group which wished to torpedo legislation was almost invariably able to do so. This was particularly so in the case of the Algerian lobby which, along with the wine interests, was one of the two largest, best connected factions in the Assembly.

The second force which helped to sandbag-in the Algerian status quo was the quasi-autonomy possessed by French officialdom in Algeria. Fundamentally, because of the weak legislative fabric in Paris, French governments abdicated power to the civil service. This actually assisted efficient policy-formation in some areas, as it did with regard to west European integration. But in the colonial sphere the result was a thorough negativism, if only because the Colonial Ministry itself was not much more than a cypher in its dealings with a bureaucracy in Algiers tightly interwoven with *pieds noirs* interests. In short, the operational character of the Fourth Republic meant that decolonization, with its need for firmness and consistency of action, was a peculiarly difficult exercise for French government, and nowhere was this more true than in the case of Algeria.

Curiously, the conclusion of the Indo-China war in 1954 made analogous initiatives in Algeria, especially in the crucial early phases of the rebellion, even less likely than might otherwise have been the case. Pierre Mendès-France had been allowed his moment of glory; the majority in the Assembly were determined to prevent him winning another prize. Mendès-France, indeed, felt bound to soften the resentment towards him by asserting that French rule in Algeria was immutable in ways that had not applied in Indo-China. Even this did not save his government, which was defeated in a parliamentary vote on 5 February 1955. Before the end of his premiership, however, Mendès-France established the two frames of French policy in Algeria which his successors invariably maintained: the massive build-up of a military effort aimed at containing the rebel *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), and an approach to political and social reform. More precisely, by December 1954 Mendès-France had despatched an additional 20,000 troops to Algeria, and Jacques Soustelle, a liberally inclined Gaullist, had been appointed Governor-General. The intellectual logic of these tactics seemed cogent enough: the pacification of the rebellion would open up an area of opportunity within which imaginative reform could create more enduring foundations for *Algérie Française*. In fact the policy of pacification consistently aborted the policy of reform. It was the incompatibility, not the interaction, of these aims which, in retrospect, seems to have

been inevitable. In part this was so because of the settler-power and bureaucratic subterfuge we have already described. But the contradiction went deeper than this. For the military build-up soon grafted the army into the nexus of *colons* and administrators. When the politicians did at last come round to the view that a French withdrawal from Algeria was essential, the process was contorted by the difficulties of disengaging the army from its Algerian affections.

Indeed, the outstanding feature of the 1954-8 period was the extent to which the French military cadres came to identify with *Algérie Française*.¹³ Many officers, particularly at senior levels, went to Algeria with the dry taste of Dien Bien Phu in their mouths. It was widely believed among this group that the Indo-Chinese war had been eminently winnable but for the corrupt and vacillating politicians at home. Some were veterans of the debacle of 1940; many were diverted, too, to the Suez campaign in 1956. In all these instances the lesson had been the same: a successful military solution hinged on exerting whatever pressures were required to keep the ministry in Paris up to the task when the going got rough. For these soldiers, Algeria was the last place where a line between military honour and political cowardice could be drawn. They were therefore determined to crush any hint of reform or negotiation in Algeria. Furthermore, their ability to smother initiatives in this way was boosted by the public adulation accorded, above all, to the mottle-grey-clad paratroopers after 1954. The Fourth Republic politicians did not act to deflate this enthusiastic hysteria because it was seen to be healing the wounds inflicted by the defeat in Asia. In fact this omission was in the end to seal the fate of the regime.

The inherent difficulty facing any French government trying to strike a balance between pacification and reform in Algeria was shown by the events following the advent of Guy Mollet's premiership in January 1956. As a Socialist he held a progressive stance on Algerian affairs, and one of his first acts was to appoint General Georges Catroux, whose colonial record was distinctly liberal, as both Governor-General and Resident-Minister in Algiers. At the same time he announced his intention to make a personal visit to North Africa, a discreet signal that henceforth Algerian policy would be brought more firmly under the wing of the premier. But when Mollet arrived in Algiers on 16 February the *pieds noirs* staged a large-scale demonstration and insisted on the reversal of Catroux's appointment. That night Catroux was dismissed and the post of Resident-Minister

was given to Robert Lacoste, an orthodox conservative. It is said that Mollet had gone to Algiers with the image of fat-cat, anti-socialist settlers fixed in his mind; when he found that the *pieds noirs* crowds were made up of ordinary French workers he decided to defend them in the face of adversity. Whatever the veracity of this version, the rest of Mollet's premiership witnessed a tightening-up of the French military effort, culminating in the Special Powers Law of 16 March 1956.

Meanwhile, what of the course and character of the war? FLN tactics from the beginning were essentially hit-and-run. Periodically the incidents were bloodily spectacular, as in the environs of Phillipville on 2 August 1955 when FLN regulars incited the killing of 32 Arabs and 71 settlers, and immediate Army reprisals resulted in the deaths of 1200 alleged 'rebels' - although most of the latter victims were undoubtedly innocent by-standers. But such episodes were not, in their scale, typical. More broadly, FLN objectives were threefold. First, they set out to break the propensity of the Arab community to cooperate with French authority, with pro-French *cadis* (village heads) as a prime target. Consequently the FLN killed more fellow Algerians than Frenchmen during a war which, like most late-colonial conflicts, arose from internal, as much as external, factors. Second, the FLN sought to link up its district military commands, or *wilayas*, into a national network. Third, an attempt was made to maintain a supply route across the Moroccan border. By 1957 the FLN had made variable progress on all three fronts. But by then, too, certain strategic constraints had clarified. Whereas in Indo-China the Viet Minh had been able to carve out secure rural bases from which to launch large-scale offensives, the FLN could not operate in such a 'regular' fashion even in the vicinity of its strongholds in the Aurès mountains. Already by the end of 1955 the French had 400,000 troops in Algeria, most of them draftees engaged on *quadrillage*, or protecting the villages of rural Algeria, while crack para-formations pursued active FLN units. Frustrated at their own inability to obtain prestigious military successes, the FLN leaders at the Soummam Congress in September 1956 decided on a new strategy, for if the Viet Minh had not been able to strike at the heartland of French power around Saigon, their Algerian counterparts were better placed to penetrate the colonial defences in the city of Algiers.

The battle of Algiers, in which the FLN carried out bombing attacks on favourite *pieds noirs* haunts, assassinated 'loyalist' Arabs,

and sought to bring the local metropole to a standstill, gained momentum in the end-months of 1956. The dense Moslem population and intricate street lay-out provided the FLN with perfect ground for urban guerrilla activities. These activities were geared to triggering such reprisals and counter-reprisals between Arabs and Europeans as to swamp the traditional accommodations of colonial rule with racial antagonisms; for the FLN knew very well that nationalism without racialism was an empty shell. In this sense, Robert Lacoste's decision in early 1957 to bring the para-units, led by General Jacques Massu, into the city and to give them almost *carte blanche* to break terrorism, marked not only a victory for the *pieds noirs*, who had been demanding better protection, but also for the FLN, who saw it as broadening the interface of Franco-Algerian friction. Massu effectively gave both groups what they wanted. Combining military and police powers, he masterminded a massive operation in which the pursuit of relevant facts through the internment, torture and sometimes murder of suspects was a necessary element. By October 1957 the level of FLN activity in Algiers had been cut to a minimum, and the city subsequently remained calm until early 1961, when it was the turn of the *pieds noirs* to try terror tactics. In the short months of its duration, however, the battle of Algiers encapsulated the dilemmas and brutalities of decolonization more powerfully than any comparable situation of modern times; it was this city trauma, rather than the prolonged rural struggle which dominated the rest of the war, which made Franco-Algerian reconciliation psychologically impossible for almost two decades after independence was finally achieved.

Although some semblance of peace returned to Algiers at the end of 1957, the wider Algerian stalemate seemed more immovable than ever. If the FLN had hoped that French metropolitan opinion would react against Massu's ruthless methods, that some deeply rooted principle of liberal humanism in French society would be evoked as news of police misdemeanours filtered through to the mainland, they were disappointed. There was an organized protest movement which gained momentum at this stage, led largely by the (small) left-inclined press and finding recruits amongst youth, professionals and intelligentsia. But this support was fragmentary at best. Even the Communist Party did not take up the cause of 'civil rights' in Algiers, and it certainly never attacked the actual conduct of the war, because it could not afford to clash with the anti-Arab sentiments of the mass

of French workers; this was, after all, a period when economic expansion was bringing many thousands of North African immigrants into mainland French cities. But in fact a subtle transformation was at work throughout French life which, in the end, was to create a milieu in which Algerian decolonization became feasible. After mid-decade the old, pre-war culture of France, with its emphasis on the 'small man' (of which the *pièdes noirs* were classic embodiments), and its overriding preoccupation with the defence of established patterns of life, gave way to a new concern with efficient management, new technology and the rationalization of industrial patterns; whereas colonialism had always had an honoured place within the traditional value-system, it had no relevance in an emerging social world whose criteria – geared, not least, to new middle classes very different from the old *haute bourgeoisie*, with its stake in the army and colonial administration – were essentially functional and commercial. By 1957-8 this evolution of attitude was giving rise to a sense (rarely expressed with clarity), not that the war was morally wrong or militarily unwinnable, but that the benefits of victory simply did not merit the huge expenditures involved. Here was the authentic voice of European decolonization. It was a voice which did not blend with, and was considerably more muted than, the shrill entreaties with which the army and settlers in Algiers called for the continued sacrifice of blood and treasure. It was amidst this cacophony of different sounds that in May 1958 the French Republic cracked apart and General de Gaulle, that master of political mood-music, returned to power. Thus in Britain the decolonization sequence never threatened the stability of any government administration, and led to the resignation of just one (middle-ranking) Cabinet Minister; in France the Algerian imbroglio smashed one form of parliamentary democracy and introduced another which, at least in its early stages, fell not far short of a quasi-dictatorship.

The end phase of the Fourth Republic had been inaugurated on 8 February 1958 when the French Air Force strafed a Tunisian village allegedly harbouring FLN activists. Many casualties had resulted and an impassioned debate followed in the United Nations. The British and Americans, concerned to damp down Mediterranean tensions, stepped in with a compromise settlement which the Tunisian and French governments accepted. But the French premier, Félix Gaillard, by bowing to this 'Anglo-Saxon' pressure, effectively sacrificed his own position in the Assembly, and he resigned on 16 April. The

usual intrigue of ministry-making followed. But, suggestively, the Algerian lobby now failed to influence the selection of premier, and it was Pierre Pflimlin, who was on record as having recommended talks with the FLN, who formed a government which included in its Cabinet not one recognized champion of *Algérie Française*. This was the moment of truth for the French Army in Algeria: either the Republic would impose on it yet another humiliating colonial defeat, or the Republic had to be forced to be true to *Algérie Française*. Meanwhile the Gaullists waited to seize their chance of regaining power, although whether the general was to do so on the coat-tails of the soldiers, or as an independent mediator *between* Republic and army, depended on the turn of events.

The narrative of events between 13 May 1958, when the *colons* brought on a general strike in Algiers, and 1 June, when de Gaulle was elected Prime Minister in the Assembly, cannot be related here. Gaullist agents carefully guided the settler extremists in Algiers towards open support for the general, so putting their man at the centre of developments. The parliamentary factions shortly found themselves faced with three choices. First, they could refuse to respond to pressures emanating from Algiers and wait for the paratroopers to descend on Paris. The army takeover in Corsica on 24 May showed that this was a probable, not merely possible, outcome of immobilism. Second, the left and centre could attempt to band together in a renewed Popular Front and hope that a public reaction against the military would be fanned into life. Flailing rhetoric along these lines was tried, but the politicians had lost the credibility without which their calls to national unity struck a hollow chord. Third, they could turn to de Gaulle as the only force capable of preserving French democracy against the full impact of military chauvinism. This last choice, in fact was, under the circumstances, the only one which met at least some of the needs of the parliamentary groups. De Gaulle manoeuvred them in this direction with deft hints that, if they did not accept him as premier, then the army most certainly would. On 28 April Pflimlin resigned. After that, the only questions left were technical. De Gaulle had refused ever to set foot in the National Assembly again; the parliamentarians refused to vote his government into existence unless he ritually entered the building. Thus on 1 June de Gaulle, not hesitating to stoop into the gutter for the pearl which lay there, finally went to the Assembly to become the last Prime Minister of the Fourth Republic. But if the army and *colons*

had helped to reinstate the general in power, it was, perhaps, they who had most to fear from the ruthless and crystalline concept of metropolitan interests which was the Gaullist hallmark.

What were de Gaulle's intentions regarding Algeria in June 1958? Subsequently disaffected officers and settlers believed that he was determined to effect decolonization from the beginning. What is more likely is that de Gaulle wished to subordinate the Algerian question within the priorities of French government; what this would mean in terms of an Algerian 'solution' was most probably unclear in his mind. But de Gaulle did have two concrete objectives regarding Algeria which he quickly moved to accomplish. The first of these was to reassert the principle of civilian control over the army. Officers of doubtful loyalty were reassigned to posts outside Algeria, and Raoul Salan, a Gaullist who had moved close to the settlers during the May crisis, was replaced as Commander-in-Chief in Algeria by General Challe. Challe's brief was to organize an offensive which, by dashing all possibility of FLN military success, would allow French policy in Algeria to be reviewed without the looming shadow of national humiliation. De Gaulle's second objective was to stimulate economic development in Algeria which, by the mid-1960s, might revolutionize the whole context of Franco-Algerian affairs and make cooperation between Arabs and Frenchmen a necessary part of the regional order, regardless of political frameworks. Thus the Constantine Plan was launched on 3 October 1958, in which pride of place was given to the role of Saharan energy resources in Algerian industrial development.

It was between late 1958 and September 1959, when de Gaulle delivered his famous address on self-determination, that the French leader probably defined his private conclusions on Algeria's future. That address postulated three possibilities: Algerian secession from the French union minus the Sahara, 'assimilation' with France, and qualified self-determination with France retaining rights in the field of economics and diplomacy. The tenor of de Gaulle's statement pointedly marked out the last option as the most desirable. Clearly it did not mean complete independence; but equally clearly it meant the end of the status quo. There is little doubt that de Gaulle was partly influenced in moving down this route by British decolonizations in 1957 in western Africa and south-east Asia. Indeed, the UK was always a Gaullist reference point; the anxiety that the British would score an advantage by shrugging off colonial burdens first was enough to prompt some rapid thinking. But at this time de Gaulle's

main concern was in Europe, and with ensuring that the new European Economic Community turned on French leadership. For that to happen French resources, economic and military, had to be switched from North Africa to the European mainland. It was implicit in this approach that the French Army had to be purged of its colonial war mentality, and oriented towards a modernized, continental and nuclear role. Thus by mid-1958 *Algérie Française* had, unknown to itself, collided with the Gaullist vision of France's future; the September statement of self-determination was the revelation of an event which had really already taken place within de Gaulle's supple political intelligence.

De Gaulle's statement was a signal to the army command: they had to choose between him and the *colons*. Hence, when in January 1960 the *colons* barricaded large parts of Algiers, they found that this time the army did not move to support them. It is sometimes argued that, if at this moment de Gaulle had moved swiftly and decisively towards an Algerian settlement, the failed army putsch of April 1961 and, more particularly, its terrorist aftermath, could have been avoided. But such action would not have been in keeping with the silken caution which characterized de Gaulle until any objective was within easy grasping distance. Instead, in March 1960 he visited Algiers and encouraged the army in its anti-FLN offensive, knowing that his own ability to dictate peace terms hinged on its progress. At the same time, by initiating secret talks with individual FLN leaders in the *wilayas* (district commands), he panicked the exiled leadership in Tunis (*Gouvernement provisoire de la République Algérienne*, or GPRA) into believing that any sustained refusal on their part to negotiate might lead to a settlement which ignored them altogether. Finally, in January 1961 he put and won a referendum to the French people which in effect gave him a mandate to construct an entity which was considerably closer to *Algérie Algérienne* than it was to *Algérie Française*. It was the knowledge that de Gaulle might use this mandate to the full in due course that led to the revolt of army elements in Algiers during April 1961. De Gaulle, however, was vindicated in his belief that the growing loyalty to him, especially among the draftees, had cut the ground from under the feet of military dissidents. The putsch collapsed within three days. Subsequently ex-army and *colon* extremists of the *Organisation armée Secrète* (OAS) conducted terrorist operations in Algiers and on the French mainland, including one assassination attempt on de Gaulle which narrowly failed, but the

only effect was to blunt the sympathies of metropolitan opinion. After April 1961 de Gaulle was, for the first time, in a position to push towards decolonization in Algeria.

In fact the resumed negotiations with the GPRA which began with the first Evian conference in May 1961 did not reach a final agreement until March 1962. Such prolonged haggling suited de Gaulle; it gave time for his security organs to break the OAS, and to give the various branches of French opinion an interval in which to accept that the Algerian stake was about to disappear. The discussions with the GPRA representatives revolved around three main issues. First, the French argued that the ceasefire in Algeria should begin immediately. Second, they claimed residual rights in the Saharan oil- and gas-fields. Third, the French negotiators sought safeguards for the *pieds noirs* in an independent Algeria, and in particular contended that the latter should be able to retain French citizenship. Predictably, GPRA concessions fell somewhat short of these markers: FLN activities were wound down only gradually, French oil companies had to be satisfied with guaranteed leasing opportunities in Saharan development, while the *pieds noirs*, as long as they clung to French citizenship, were to be eligible for Algerian civil (but not full nationality) rights. The final terms were completed at Evian on 18 March 1962, and a full ceasefire became operational the following day. But if French interests in Algeria were thereby reformulated, those of the *pieds noirs* had ceased to matter, since, outside the realms of the conference chamber, it had become all too plain that they could not stay in North Africa. In the short period before the French Army itself departed, the settlers in their hundreds of thousands, clutching whatever movable goods they could, streamed out through Algiers airport. Most of them returned to France, many remaining in the south, and it is ironic to note that a fair proportion probably ended up as good Gaullists after resettlement. If French participation in the EEC, by diverting metropolitan energies out of its old channels, had helped to evict them from one home, it certainly eased them relatively painlessly into another by virtue of the prosperity which fortuitously marked this period of French history.

Finally, what conclusions can be made regarding the Algerian revolution as a movement?¹⁴ Little is known of its internal history; only the recurrent murders among the leadership echelons, and a few scraps of memoirs, witness to its highly fissile quality. These divisions

had ideological and ethnic causes, but their effects were highlighted by the French Army's success in cutting the *wilayas* off from each other, and in erecting a Chinese wall between the exiled leaders abroad and the field units in Algeria. Thus the FLN was prevented from having a dialogue with itself; a consensus on tactics for war and strategies for the post-independence world could never emerge, and the result was an exotic flowering of suspicions and rivalries. Once colonial authority was withdrawn, it was probably inevitable that only the regular army, which had been built up in Tunis and jealously guarded by its commanders from any encounter with French troops precisely to preserve its strength for such a situation, could resolve the tensions surrounding the GPRA by imposing its own will. Here lay the roots of that military authoritarianism which marked post-independence Algeria. Thus, if the French Army had failed to sustain *Algérie Française*, it certainly succeeded in making sure that *Algérie Algérienne* was deformed at birth.

III THE BELGIAN CONGO: THE BREAKDOWN OF A DECOLONIZATION

The importance of the Algerian War in shaping European opinion on colonial issues, particularly during and after 1960, can only be properly understood if it is seen in relation to crises elsewhere in Africa which ran parallel with it, and in this latter category it was the trauma of Belgian decolonization which is of outstanding significance. The Congo – by virtue of its central position in the continent, vast size and mineral wealth – had always been a lynchpin of European rule in Africa. Furthermore, the undisturbed stability of colonial authority in this territory during the mid-1950s meant that the pattern of rapid political change in West Africa did not necessarily have implications for the rest of the land-mass. The suddenness of Belgian decolonization after 1959, and the degree of anarchy which attended the transfer of power, shattered European assumptions as to the 'manageability' of change under contemporary African conditions, and led to the panicky conviction that obligations in this part of the world had to be scaled down as quickly as possible before the costs of decolonization escalated.

Between 1945 and 1959 Belgian rule in the Congo was characterized by a remarkable stability. During these years there was no