

## The Algerian War of Independence 1954-1962

### Key questions

1. What is psychological warfare? How does it function? How can we measure its effectiveness? [concept]
2. In the specific case of the Algerian War, how and why did Algerian women become a target for psychological warfare? How did they respond? [factual case study]
3. In order to answer these questions, what are the sources historians use and how do they use them? [methodology]

### Key background info

- What made Algeria 'different' to the rest of the French empire? (not a colony, 3 departments of France, large settler population)
- National Liberation Front – FLN – launches attacks on 1 November 1954. Small, poorly armed facing one of the best trained and equipped armies in the world. War was not going to be won with military might but by wearing down French desire to hold on to empire and delegitimising France on the world stage.
- France in Algeria – Europeans outnumbered 8:1 – 'peace in Algeria' would only come through either massive and continued repression or winning over the population.

**What aims does psychological warfare have and what forms can it take?:** winning hearts and minds (within Algeria and international opinion)

- rally supporters
- demoralise enemy
- social action
- tracts, films, health care etc
- Language is very important: For France 'a war without a name': 'operations to maintain order in North Africa', 'pacification' (regroupment camps vs. concentration camps)

### Why are women a particular target?

- Women = considered to be the heart of the Muslim family
- ALN units' survival notably in rural areas depends on logistical support of women – feeding, hiding, nursing soldiers. Mao Zedong 'fish in water'
- Participation of women – shows the whole population is fighting, not just a group of fanatical Nasser-inspired 'outlaws')
- Initially at least, women are not under suspicion (veiled/unveiled women)

### How does the French government and army attempt to win over/use women?

- Jan 1957-late 1959: military-civilian regime in Algiers launches 'emanipation' strategy
- extend legal rights and 'liberate' Muslim women
- unveiling
- Mobile female medical teams (EMSI) + SAS (*Sections administratives spécialisées*) created in Sept 1955 by Soustelle to 'pacify' rural areas

- improved access to schooling
- youth training
- European-Muslim women's circles
- extension of the vote
- reform of family law
- Nafissa Sid Cara, elected to NA in Nov 1958, first Muslim woman to be named a Junior Minister in a French government in 1959.
- Other side of the coin: oppression – use of rape and sexual humiliation

#### **How does the FLN seek to win over/use women?**

- FLN launches its own propaganda – women can only achieve equality by fighting for a country freed from colonial domination
- El Moudjahid, organ of the FLN, announces a revolution in gender relations. Fanon *L'An V de la Révolution algérienne* (1959): 'Algerian society reveals itself not to be the womanless society that had been so well described. Side by side with us, our sisters upset a little more the enemy's plans of attack and definitively liquidate old myths.'
- Cases of rape and torture promoted on world stage (Djamila Boupacha – April 1959 Gisèle Halimi, Simone de Beauvoir, Pablo Picasso); Djamila Bouhired – film by Youssef Chahine 1958 (*Djamila the Algerian*)
- Family ties, networks – again use of language of the family (brother and sister)

Key words: emancipation, depersonalisation, pacification, brother (*khouya*)/ sister (*oukh't*).