

## End of the war

De Gaulle convoked the first referendum on the self-determination of Algeria on 8 January 1961, which 75% of the voters (both in France and Algeria) approved and de Gaulle's government began secret peace negotiations with the FLN. In the Algerian départements 69.51% voted in favor of self-determination.[73] The talks that began in March 1961 broke down when de Gaulle insisted on including the much smaller Mouvement national algérien (MNA), which the FLN objected to.[74] Since the FLN was the by far stronger movement with the MNA almost wiped out by this time, the French were finally forced to exclude the MNA from the talks after the FLN walked out for a time.[74]:88

The generals' putsch in April 1961, aimed at canceling the government's negotiations with the FLN, marked the turning point in the official attitude toward the Algerian war. Leading the coup attempt to depose de Gaulle were General Raoul Salan, General André Zeller, General Maurice Challe, and General Edmond Jouhaud.[74]:87–97 Only the paratroop divisions and the Foreign Legion joined the coup, while the Air Force, Navy and most of the Army stayed loyal to General de Gaulle, but at one moment de Gaulle went on French television to ask for public support with the normally lofty de Gaulle saying "Frenchmen, Frenchwomen, help me!".[74]:89 De Gaulle was now prepared to abandon the pieds-noirs, which no previous French government was willing to do. The army had been discredited by the putsch and kept a low profile politically throughout the rest of France's involvement with Algeria. The OAS was to be the main standard bearer for the pieds-noirs for the rest of the war.

Talks with the FLN reopened at Évian in May 1961; after several false starts, the French government decreed that a ceasefire would take effect on March 18, 1962. A major difficulty at the talks was de Gaulle's decision to grant independence only to the coastal regions of Algeria, where the bulk of the population lived, while hanging onto the Sahara, which happened to be rich in oil and

gas, while the FLN claimed all of Algeria.[74] During the talks, the pied-noir and Muslim communities engaged in a low level civil war with bombings, shootings, throat-cutting and assassinations being the preferred methods.[74]:90 The Canadian historian John Cairns wrote at times it seemed like both communities were "going berserk" as everyday "murder was indiscriminate".[74]:90 On 29 June 1961, de Gaulle announced on TV that fighting was "virtually finished" and afterwards there was no major fighting between the French Army and the FLN; during the summer of 1961 the OAS and the FLN engaged in a civil war, in which the greater number of the Muslims soon made a difference.[74]:90 To pressure de Gaulle to abandon his demand to keep the Sahara, the FLN organized demonstrations in France from Algerians living there in the fall of 1961, which the French police crushed.[74]:91 It was in the course of crushing one demonstration that a massacre of Algerians on 17 October 1961, which was ordered by Maurice Papon, took place. On 10 January 1962, the FLN started a "general offensive" against the OAS, staging a series on the pied-noir communities as a way of applying pressure.[74]:91 On 7 February 1962, the OAS attempted to assassinate the Culture Minister André Malraux by setting off a bomb in his apartment building that failed to kill its intended target, but did leave a four-year girl living in the adjoining apartment blinded by the shrapnel.[75] The blinding of the girl did much to turn French opinion against the OAS.

On 20 February 1962 a peace accord was reached for granting independence to all of Algeria.[74]:87 In their final form, the Évian Accords allowed the pieds-noirs equal legal protection with Algerians over a three-year period. These rights included respect for property, participation in public affairs, and a full range of civil and cultural rights. At the end of that period, however, all Algerian residents would be obliged to become Algerian citizens or be classified as aliens with the attendant loss of rights. The agreement also allowed France to establish military bases in Algeria even after independence (including the nuclear test site of Reggane, the naval base of Mers-el-Kebir and the air base of Bou Sfer) and to have privileges vis-à-vis Algerian oil. The OAS started a campaign of spectacular terrorist attacks to sabotage the Évian Accords, hoping that if

enough Muslims were killed, a general pogrom against the pieds-noirs would break out, leading the French Army to turn its guns against the government.[74]:87 Despite ample provocation with OAS lobbing mortar shells into the casbah of Algiers, the FLN gave orders for no retaliatory attacks.[74]:87 In the spring of 1962, the OAS turned to bank robbery to finance its war against both the FLN and the French state, and bombed special units sent by Paris to hunt them down.[74]:93 Only eighty deputies voted against the Évian Accords in the National Assembly and Cairns wrote the "fulminations" of Jean-Marie Le Pen against de Gaulle were only "...the traditional verbal excesses of third-rate firebrands without a substantial following and without a constructive idea".[74]

Following the cease fire tensions developed between the pied-noir community and their former protectors in the French Army. An O.A.S. ambush of French conscripts on 20 March was followed by 20,000 gendarmes and troops being ordered to occupy the major pied-noir district of Bab-el-Oued in Algiers.[16]:524 A week later French-officered Muslim tirailleurs panicked and opened fire on a crowd of pied-noir demonstrators in the centre of the city.[76] Total casualties in these three incidents were 326 dead and wounded amongst the pied-noir and 110 French military personnel.[16]:524–5 A journalist who saw the shootings on 26 March 1962, Henry Tanner, described the scene: "When the shooting stopped, the street was littered with bodies, of women, as well as men, dead, wounded or dying. The black pavement looked grey, as if bleached by fire. Crumpled French flags were lying in pools of blood. Shattered glass and spent cartridges were everywhere".[74]:94 A number of shocked pieds-noirs screamed that they were not French anymore.[74]:95 One woman screamed "Stop firing! My God, we're French..." before she was shot down.[74]:95 The massacre served to greatly embitter the pied-noir community and led to a massive surge of support for the OAS.[74]:95

In the second referendum on the independence of Algeria, held in April 1962, 91 percent of the French electorate approved the Evian Accords. On 1 July 1962, some 6 million of a total Algerian

electorate of 6.5 million cast their ballots. The vote was nearly unanimous, with 5,992,115 votes for independence, 16,534 against, with most pieds-noirs and Harkis either having fled or abstaining.[77] De Gaulle pronounced Algeria an independent country on 3 July. The Provisional Executive, however, proclaimed 5 July, the 132nd anniversary of the French entry into Algeria, as the day of national independence.

During the three months between the cease-fire and the French referendum on Algeria, the OAS unleashed a new campaign. The OAS sought to provoke a major breach in the ceasefire by the FLN, but the attacks now were aimed also against the French army and police enforcing the accords as well as against Muslims. It was the most wanton carnage that Algeria had witnessed in eight years of savage warfare. OAS operatives set off an average of 120 bombs per day in March, with targets including hospitals and schools.

During the summer of 1962, a rush of pieds-noirs fled to France. Within a year, 1.4 million refugees, including almost the entire Jewish community, had joined the exodus. Despite the declaration of independence on 5 July 1962, the last French forces did not leave the naval base of Mers El Kébir until 1967. (The Evian Accords had permitted France to maintain its military presence for fifteen years, so the withdrawal in 1967 was significantly ahead of schedule.[16]:) Cairns writing from Paris in 1962 declared: "In some ways the last year has been the worse. Tension has never been higher. Disenchantment in France at least has never been greater. The mindless cruelty of it all has never been more absurd and savage. This last year, stretching from the hopeful spring of 1961 to the ceasefire of 18 March 1962 spanned a season of shadow boxing, false threats, capitulation and murderous hysteria. French Algeria died badly. Its agony was marked by panic and brutality as ugly as the record of European imperialism could show. In the spring of 1962 the unhappy corpse of empire still shuddered and lashed out and stained itself in fratricide. The whole episode of its death, measured at least seven and half years, constituted perhaps the most pathetic and sordid event in

the entire history of colonialism. It is hard to see how anybody of importance in the tangled web of the conflict came out looking well. Nobody won the conflict, nobody dominated it." [74]:87