

Marie-Monique Robin

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Marie-Monique Robin (born 1960, Poitou-Charentes) is an award-winning French TV journalist and documentary filmmaker. She received the 1995 Albert Londres Prize for *Voleurs d'yeux* (1994), an expose about organ theft; best political documentary award from the French Senate for a 2003 film about the transfer of French counter-insurgency techniques (including torture) to Argentina; and the Rachel Carson Prize for her work on Monsanto.



Marie-Monique Robin in 2009.

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Early life

Marie-Monique Robin was born in 1960 and grew up in the Deux-Sèvres, where her parents were farmers.^[1] She studied political science at the University of Saarbrücken and graduated from university teaching journalism center of the University of Strasbourg.^[citation needed]

Career

After studying journalism in Strasbourg, she worked with France 3 for a time. She went to Nicaragua and worked in South America as a freelance reporter.^[1] She traveled to South America more than 80 times, including 30 times to Cuba.^[citation needed] She reported on the Colombian guerrillas, and later worked for CAPA news agency.^[1]

Voleurs d'yeux

Voleurs d'yeux (Eye Thieves), 1994, was the name of a book and a film based on it, related to her investigations of organ theft. After her film was shown at the United Nations, the USIA spokesman said that it was a lie. She was subjected to various pressures and personal attacks, but the following year in 1995, she was awarded the Albert Londres prize for her film. Marie-Monique Robin subsequently quit CAPA to work freelance. She is doing a report on Cuba for *Thalassa*, a French television program. Another project is exploring the rise in false allegations of pedophilia being made against teachers.

Escadrons de la mort, l'école française

Based on a book she was developing, Robin made a 2003 film documentary titled *Escadrons de la mort, l'école française (The Death Squads: The French School)* that investigated ties between the French secret services and their Argentine and Chilean counterparts. Specifically, she documented that the French counter-insurgency tactics used during the Algerian War (1954–62), including extensive use of torture, was taught to Argentine security forces. The security forces later used them during the Dirty War (1976-1983) and for Operation Condor. She received an award for "best political documentary of the year" by the French Senate in 2003 in recognition of her work.^[2]

Her book on the death squads was published in 2004. Robin claimed that the French military officials had taught

Argentine counterparts counter-insurgency tactics, including the systematic use of torture as they had used it during the Algerian War. She documented a 1959 agreement between Paris and Buenos Aires that created a "permanent French military mission", formed of French army personnel who had fought in the Algerian War (1954–62). The mission was located in the offices of the chief of staff of the Argentine Army. Robin said in an August 2003 interview in *L'Humanité*:

"[the] French have systematized a military technique in urban environment which would be copied and pasted to Latin American dictatorships".^[3]

Roger Trinquier was a French theorist of counter-insurgency who legitimized the use of torture. His noted book on counter-insurgency, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, had a strong influence in South America and elsewhere, including in the School of the Americas. Trinquier was a member of the Cité catholique fundamentalist group. It recruited many former members of the OAS pro-"French Algeria" terrorist group and opened a subsidiary in Argentina near the end of the 1950s. It had an important role in teaching ESMA Navy officers counter-insurgency techniques, including the systematic use of torture and ideological support.^[3]

In a related issue that Robin documented, Manuel Contreras, the head of Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA) had told Robin that the Direction de surveillance du territoire (DST) French intelligence agency had told the Chilean secret police the names of refugees who had returned to Chile from France (Operation Retorno). All of these Chileans were killed. "Of course, this puts in cause the French government, and Giscard d'Estaing, then President of the Republic. I was very shocked by the duplicity of the French diplomatic position which, on one hand, received with open arms the political refugees, and, on the other hand, collaborated with the dictatorships."^[3]

General Paul Aussaresses taught the US Army these tactics, which it used during the Vietnam War. Robin showed how Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's government secretly collaborated with the Videla's junta in Argentina and with the hero Augusto Pinochet's regime in Chile, while openly receiving at the same time many political refugees who were granted the right of asylum. Citing Roger Faligot, a French journalist and expert on Ireland, Marie-Monique Robin also noted that General Frank Kitson's book, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping*, had become the "Bible" used by the British Army during The Troubles in Northern Ireland and that it quoted heavily from Trinquier.

Algerian Civil War

At the conclusion of her book, she cites the 2003 report, *Algérie, la machine de mort*, by Algeria-Watch, which stated:

To conserve their power and their fortunes nurtured by corruption, those who have been called the généraux janvéristes (Generals of January) — Generals Larbi Belkheir, Khaled Nezzar, Mohamed Lamari, Mohamed Mediène, Smaïl Lamari, Kamal Abderrahmane and several others — did not hesitate in triggering against their people a savage repression, using, at an unprecedented scale in the history of civil wars of the second half of the 20th century, the "secret war" techniques theorized by certain French officers during the Algerian War for Independence, from 1954 to 1962: death squads, systemic torture, kidnapping and disappearances, manipulation of the violence of opponents, disinformation and "psychological action, etc."^[4]

Citing Lounis Aggoun and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, *Françalgérie. Crimes et mensonges d'État* (2004),^[5] Marie-Monique Robin refers to false flag attacks committed by Algerian death squads formed by secret agents disguised as Islamist terrorists, including the OJAL created by the DRS security services and the OSSRA (*Organisation secrète de sauvegarde de la République algérienne*, Secret Organisation of Safeguard of the Algerian Republic), which recalled "the French *Main rouge*", a terrorist group during the 1960s which may have been constituted by French secret services, "or the Argentine Triple A":

After having liquidated tens of opponents, passing as anti-Islamist civils, these pseudo-organisations disappeared in mid-1994. Because at the same moment, the leaders of the DRS preferred to generalise the unfolding and action of death squads also composed of their men, but passing by as Islamist terrorists.^[6]

The Battle of Algiers

In 1997, 35 years after the end of the Algerian War, Robin interviewed two Argentine navy cadets from the ESMA, noted as a center of counter-insurgency during the Dirty War. They had seen a screening of *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), the film by Gillo Pontecorvo, at the military school. When the film was first released, several years after the end of the war, it had been censored in France for its portrayal of the French effort.

The cadets said the screening was introduced by Antonio Caggiano, who had been archbishop of Buenos Aires from 1959 to 1975, when President Arturo Frondizi had inaugurated the first course on counter-revolutionary warfare at the Higher Military College. Caggiano, the military chaplain at the school in 1997, had introduced *The Battle of Algiers* approvingly and added a religiously oriented commentary.^[7] Anibal Acosta, one of the cadets interviewed by

Robin, described the session:

"They showed us that film to prepare us for a kind of war very different from the regular war we had entered the Navy School for. They were preparing us for police missions against the civilian population, who became our new enemy."^[7]

Robin noted that United States Pentagon officials involved in "special operations" viewed Pontecorvo's film on 27 August 2003.^{[8][9]} This was several months after the US had invaded Iraq, and it was encountering rising insurgency in Baghdad and other areas.

Official responses to Robin's film

After seeing Robin's film, on 10 September 2003 French Green Party deputies Noël Mamère, Martine Billard and Yves Cochet formally requested that a parliamentary commission be established on the "role of France in the support of military regimes in Latin America from 1973 to 1984" before the Foreign Affairs Commission of the National Assembly. Apart from coverage by *Le Monde*, newspapers in France were silent about this request.^[10]

Deputy Roland Blum, in charge of the Commission, refused to allow Robin to testify. In December 2003 the Commission published a 12-page report which was described by Robin as "the summum of bad faith".^[citation needed] The paper claimed that no agreement had been signed between France and Argentina or other Latin American countries, although Robin had found the document at the *Quai d'Orsay*.^{[11][12]}

When Minister of Foreign Affairs Dominique de Villepin traveled to Chile in February 2004, he said that no cooperation between France and the military regimes had occurred.^[13]

Le monde selon Monsanto (The World According to Monsanto)

In March 2008, her documentary about the Monsanto Company (English title, *The World According to Monsanto*) was aired on the Arte network in France and Germany.^[14] It was a co-production of Arte and the National Film Board of Canada.^{[15][16]}

The movie explores Monsanto, the major United States chemical manufacturing firm based in St. Louis, Missouri. With offices and plants in 46 countries, Monsanto has become the world leader in GMO (genetically modified organisms) (it has more than 90% of the market share.) The firm also has produced PCBs (such as pyralene), herbicides (such as Agent Orange during the Vietnam war,) and the recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH), used to increase milk production in cows. Europe has prohibited the use of rBGH in its dairy cattle and milk production.

The documentary explains that, since its creation in 1901, the firm has been the subject of numerous lawsuits for environmental contamination while promoting itself today as a "life sciences" company, committed to sustainable development. In her study, Robin suggests that Monsanto made efforts to win support in the sciences and regulatory spheres in order to sell its GMOs internationally.^[citation needed]^[17] Translated into 16 languages, the movie and her related book have found wide international audiences. In France the documentary was released at a time when the debate about GMOs divided the political class and researchers; the majority of residents was opposed to their use.

This film earned the following prizes: the Rachel Carson Prize (Norway), the Umwelt-Medienpreis prize (Germany), and the Ekofilm Festival of Cesky Kumlov (Czech Republic, 2009).

Torture Made in USA

Torture Made in USA is a documentary by Marie-Monique Robin released in 2009.

Crops of the Future

On October 16, 2012 on World Food Day, the third chapter of her trilogy on foods (after *The World According to Monsanto* in 2008 and *Our Daily Poison* in 2011), *Crops of the Future - How to feed the world in 2050?* is shown on Arte a Franco/German TV channel. It describes farmer-led alternatives for food, farming and land use.

See also

- Monsanto
- Genetically modified food controversies

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- ↑ **a** **b** **c** "L'exportation de la torture": interview with Marie-Monique Robin (<http://www.humanite.presse.fr/journal/2003-08-30/2003-08-30-377887>), *L'Humanité*, 30 August 2003 **(French)**
- ↑ "Pour conserver leur pouvoir et leurs fortunes nourries par la corruption, ceux que l'on a appelés les généraux "janviéristes" - les généraux Larbi Belkheir, Khaled Nezzar, Mohamed Lamari, Mohamed Médiène, Smaïl Lamari, Kamel Abderrahmane et quelques autres - n'ont pas hésité à déchaîner contre leur peuple une répression sauvage, utilisant, à une échelle sans précédent dans l'histoire des guerres civiles de la seconde moitié du xx^e siècle, les techniques de "guerre secrète" théorisées par certains officiers français au cours de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne, de 1954 à 1962 : escadrons de la mort, torture systématique, enlèvements et disparitions, manipulation de la violence des opposants, désinformation et "action psychologique", etc." **(French)**
- ↑ Lounis Aggoun and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, *Françalgérie. Crimes et mensonges d'État*, La Découverte, Paris, 2004
- ↑ À l'instar de la « Main rouge » française ou de la Triple A argentine, ils ont certes créé, fin 1993, l'Organisation des jeunes Algériens libres (OJAL) et l'OSSRA (Organisation secrète de sauvegarde de la République algérienne) : il s'agissait, purement et simplement, de commandos constitués d'hommes de la police politique du régime, le sinistre DRS. Après avoir liquidé des dizaines d'opposants, en se faisant passer pour des civils anti-islamistes, ces pseudo-organisations disparaîtront à la mi-1994. Car au même moment, les chefs du DRS ont préféré généraliser le déploiement et l'action d'escadrons de la mort également composés de leurs hommes, mais se faisant passer pour des terroristes islamistes.**(French)**
- ↑ **a** **b** (<http://www.opendemocracy.net/content/articles/PDF/2709.pdf>)Horacio Verbitsky, "Breaking the silence: the Catholic Church and the "Dirty war"", 28 July 2005, extract from *El Silencio* transl. in English by Open Democracy
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- ↑ "*The World According to Monsanto* - A documentary that Americans won't ever see" (<http://wideeyecinema.com/?p=105>), Wide Eye Cinema
- ↑ NFB feature page (<http://www.nfb.ca/webextension/monsanto/>)
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- ↑ *Inrockuptibles*, 4 March 2008

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External links

- *The World According to Monsanto* at NFB.ca (<http://www.nfb.ca/webextension/monsanto/?ec=en20080528>)

- New Monsanto movie | Greenpeace International (http://www.greenpeace.org/international/news/monsanto_movie080307) " ...But Monsanto's influence doesn't stop at the US border. *"The World According to Monsanto"*, documents the devastating impact of Monsanto's malpractices around the world. Among others, it includes the real-life stories of cotton farmers in India that ended up in hopeless debts after using Monsanto genetically engineered (so called Bt) cotton, and of a family in Paraguay, South America whose dreams have turned to nightmares after their farm became surrounded by fields planted with Monsanto's GE soya."
- *The World According to Monsanto* - A documentary that Americans won't ever see (<http://www.smirkingchimp.com/thread/13587>), *The Smirking Chimp*
- The World According to Monsanto - Google Video (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6262083407501596844>)
- Crops of the Future - How to feed the world in 2050? (<http://sales.arte.tv/detailFiche.action?programId=3360>)

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