

# Félix Éboué: “HECK NO!”



## French Colonial Administrator & *France Libre* War Hero

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Collectors of French Colonies postage stamps are familiar with Félix Éboué from the 1945 French Colonial Series that featured his portrait.



Gouverneur Général Félix ÉBOUÉ  
(1884-1944)

Premier Résistant de l'Empire  
Officier de la Légion d'Honneur  
Croix de la Libération.



Félix Éboué was the grandson of slaves and was born but was born a free man on December 26, 1884, at Cayenne, French Guiana, a French colony whose residents had full French citizenship.



Victor  
Schoelcher

A brilliant student, Éboué won a scholarship, went to study in Bordeaux, and obtained his baccalaureate. Subsequently, he went to Paris and entered the Colonial School in 1906. In addition to this training, the student enrolled in the Faculty of Law and obtained his law license.



Félix Éboué: The 1945 French Colonial Series, 13 colonies, 26 stamps (2 stamps per colony)

Career Postings ★



Birth Place

Also-  
Oubangui  
French Sudan  
French Congo  
Chad

Only one stamp from each colony is shown



Subsequently, he became a Director in French Equatorial Africa (AEF) where he served for twenty years.

His successive appointments took him to Madagascar and then to Oubangui.

He supported educated Africans and placed more in the colonial administration, as well as supporting preservation of African culture.





- In 1927, Félix Éboué was appointed a Knight of the Legion of Honor.
- In 1933, he was appointed Secretary General of Martinique.
- He then served in French Sudan.
- In 1936 he was elevated to the rank of governor of Guadeloupe.

## Governor of Guadeloupe, West Indies.

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- Éboué is famous mainly for his Jouer le Jeu (Play the Game) speech of 1937, delivered to students at Carnot middle school. However, he gave another speech the same year that was just as memorable. Speaking during a worker's and planter's strike to an angry crowd demanding reparations for historical wrongs, Félix Éboué urged workers not to resort to violence against the owner of the Sainte-Rose sugar factory, who was barricaded inside his house with his family. He told the workers to look at him and do likewise: "...Look at these hands, as black as yours; they have never been soiled or spattered. I am speaking to you, and to those above you, I am speaking to Guadeloupe. ...".





Sugar cane mill



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In 1938, Félix becomes governor of Chad, French Equatorial Africa. One of the poorest French Colonies. A Promotion or Demotion?





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- France fell to the Germans in June 1941.
- De Gaulle issues his French Declaration "TOUS LES FRANÇAIS"
- Chad was strategically located south of Axis-occupied Libya



Éboué suffered no illusions regarding the implications of Vichy's capitulation to Nazi racial philosophy for himself and other non-European French nationals.



Famous as the unofficial headquarters of the Free French in World War 2

. De Gaulle headed a rag-tag group of defectors from pro-German Vichy France. In absentia, General Charles De Gaulle was sentenced to death by Vichy in 1940, barely tolerated by the British and headquartered in a Soho bar in London. He was desperately looking for friends. Perhaps he may have one in Chad?



THE FRENCH PUB AT 49 DEAN STREET, SOHO, LONDON ENGLAND

- Éboué was shocked and appalled by Marshal Pétain's pro-German armistice proposal



- His reply to Pétain was

**“Heck No!”**

(English translation of his reply in reference to joining the hecking Germans)

- Éboué secretly prepared to rally Chad and all of nearby French Equatorial Africa to General de Gaulle's Free French cause
- Chad under Felix Éboué was the *very first* French colony to declare allegiance to de Gaulle and the Free French on August 26, 1940.
- Taking Éboué's lead, Cameroon, French Congo, and Oubangui-Chari all declared for Free France in the next 5 days.





Éboué, as the first French Colonial Administrator to rally to the Free French, was perhaps the single arm reaching out of the coffin of France in the cartoon.

- Éboué received General De Gaulle himself on October 15, 1941 at Fort-Lamy.



Félix Éboué

Charles de Gaulle

The label translates as “Chad land of loyal and courageous men’- [signed] *C. de Gaulle*

- Gabon was the only Vichy holdout in French Equatorial Africa, resisting until November 1940.

Stadium



Pantheon  
Paris

- Éboué was appointed Governor General of French Equatorial Africa by Charles De Gaulle after the Free French gained control of the region's other French territories.



- Éboué was decorated as a Companion of the Order of the Liberation by General Charles de Gaulle on August 12, 1940, because it was from the Equatorial Africa that the first armed troops of Free France volunteered.



- The pro-German Vichy Government sentenced Éboué to death in abstencia in 1941.

- Éboué's actions in Chad prevented the Italians from closing the gap between General Graziani's Libyan army and the Duke of Aosta's Ethiopian Army.



Duke of Aosta



General Graziani

- Éboué's securing of Chad for the Free French allowed General Leclerc to lead raids from Chad into Italian Libya.
- After Leclerc's forces captured Kufra, he had his men swear an oath, known today as the *Serment de Koufra*, in which they pledged to fight on until their flag flew over the Strasbourg Cathedral. That pledge was kept!



Leclerc's Troops in Chad *enroute* to Strasbourg



- Brazzaville Conference 1944
- Free French politicians and high-ranking colonial officials from the French African colonies met in Brazzaville, French Congo



Félix Éboué and Charles de Gaulle at the Brazzaville Conference in 1944

- Félix Éboué was an organizer and actively participated in the Brazzaville conference on decolonization
- His theories such as indigenous participation in the administration were taken up.

- The conference recommended political, social, and economic reforms and led to the agreement on the **Brazzaville Declaration**.
- French Empire becomes French Union of Nations based on equality



Brazzaville commemorative.  
Of course de Gaulle gets top billing.  
Félix Éboué is recognizable to the right  
of the General on the right blue stamp.



Stamps commemorating the 1944 Brazzaville Conference. Who can spot Félix?



- Félix Éboué died on May 17, 1944 in Cairo of a heart attack
- He was given a hero's burial in the Pantheon in Paris, on May 20, 1949.



In 1961, the *Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique Équatoriale et du Cameroun* (Central Bank of Equatorial African States and Cameroon) issued a 100-franc banknote featuring Félix Éboué's portrait.



# A F R I C A

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## OBITUARY

MEMBERS of the Institute will have heard with regret of the death of Governor Félix Eboué in the French Hospital in Cairo on 17 May.

Born of African stock at Cayenne in French Guiana in 1884, Monsieur Eboué studied at the Lycée at Bordeaux and then entered the École Coloniale in Paris and obtained his degree in law. His first appointment took him to the Colony of Oubangui in French Equatorial Africa, where for twenty-five years he occupied various administrative posts. In 1932 he was appointed Chief Secretary of the Government of Martinique, and after a short period of service in the French Sudan he became Governor of Guadeloupe in 1936. In 1938 he returned to Africa as Governor of Chad Colony, and in 1940 was appointed Governor-general of French Equatorial Africa.

His genuine sympathy with the people under his administration and his natural understanding of the African enabled him to do outstanding work in all the territories with which he was connected. While in Guadeloupe he was responsible for a programme of important social reforms. In Africa he pursued a policy in which the interests of the native community were always in the forefront. The way in which he developed cotton-growing on a commercial scale in the Chad region commanded the respect and admiration of the experts. When he was appointed to the Governorship of Chad Colony he was warned that, in case of war, his territory might have to play an important role, and he lost no time in preparing the Colony for all eventualities. When France signed the Armistice, he hesitated not a moment in rallying to the cause of General de Gaulle. His prompt action was the signal for the French Cameroons and the whole of French Equatorial Africa to join the Allies.

This Institute had been in correspondence with Monsieur Eboué, who showed great interest in our work, and we were looking forward to a closer collaboration in which his experience would have been of the greatest help to us.

HANNS VISCHER

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# Official Pass to attend the internment



# The Pantheon, Paris in 1946





# Félix Éboué





Finally top billing for Félix with de Gaulle in the background in 2004



# Monuments honouring Félix Éboué

- French West Indies
- Bust of Félix Eboué Monument - Sainte-Rose This bust was erected in honor of a speech made by Governor of Guadeloupe Félix Eboué (1936 to 1938) to strikers at the Bonne-Mère Factory.





- Within France, a square, Place Félix-Éboué, in Paris is named for him, as is the adjacent Paris Métro station Daumesnil Félix-Éboué. A primary school in Le Pecq bears his name.





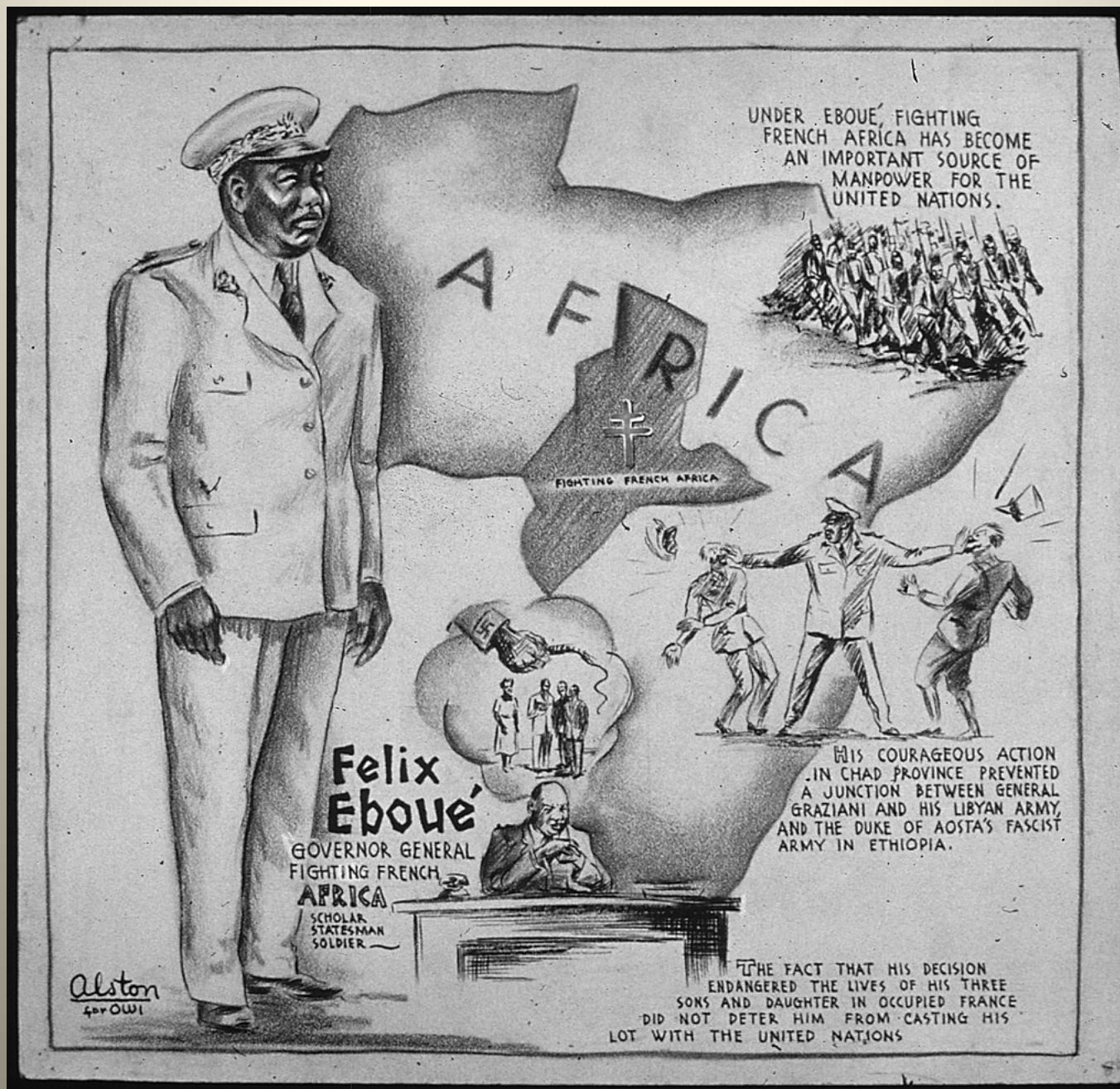
Brazzaville, Congo



Cayenne, French Guiana

# Conclusions

- Without an individual like Félix Éboué from French Guiana, who became the first French Colonial Governor with colonial roots, and who pushed his policy of integration and local elites, the war-time Free French government of General de Gaulle would never have had the power it had during the conflict.



By Charles Henry Alston, 1907-1977, Artist (NARA record: 3569253) - U.S. National Archives and Records



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