

## **NBHistory podcast: Spencer D. Segalla, "Empire and Catastrophe" w/Michael Vann**

Discussion published by Michael Vann on Sunday, February 5, 2023

**New Books in History podcast: Spencer D. Segalla, *Empire and Catastrophe: Decolonization and Environmental Disaster in North Africa and Mediterranean France since 1954* (U Nebraska Press, 2021)**

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/empire-and-catastrophe>

Spencer Segalla's *Empire and Catastrophe: Decolonization and Environmental Disaster in North Africa and Mediterranean France since 1954* (U Nebraska Press, 2021) explores natural and anthropogenic disasters during the years of decolonization and Cold War. Four disasters make up the core of the book: the 1954 earthquake in Algeria's Chélif Valley, just weeks before the onset of the Algerian Revolution; a mass poisoning in Morocco in 1959 caused by toxic substances from an American military base; the 1959 Malpasset dam collapse in Fréjus, France, which devastated the Algerian immigrant community in the town but which was blamed on Algerian sabotage; and the 1960 earthquake in Agadir, Morocco, which set off a public relations war between the United States, France, and the Soviet Union, and which ignited a Moroccan national debate over modernity, identity, architecture, and urban planning. Spencer Segalla argues for the integration of environmental events into narratives of political and cultural decolonization. *Empire and Catastrophe* will interest environmental historians, North Africa area studies specialists, and historians of France and French imperialism. *Empire and Catastrophe: Decolonization and Environmental Disaster in North Africa and Mediterranean France since 1954* is available open access online for no charge. Dr. Segalla, professor of history at the University of Tampa, completed his Ph.D. at Stonybrook in 2003. In addition to *Empire and Catastrophe*, he has published *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956* with the University of Nebraska Press in 2009. Michael G. Vann is a professor of world history at California State University, Sacramento. A specialist in imperialism and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, he is the author of *The Great Hanoi Rat Hunt: Empires, Disease, and Modernity in French Colonial Vietnam* (Oxford University Press, 2018). When he's not reading or talking about new books with smart people, Mike can be found surfing in Santa Cruz, California.

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