

Behind the News

The Political Aftermath of Algeria

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After nearly eight years of armed conflict and frightful expenditure of life, money and heated political argument, France is in the process of liquidating her Algerian problem.

It had been this issue which, in 1958, caught the Fourth Republic so embarrassingly incapable of averting and then suppressing the European settler—military insurrection which very nearly embroiled France in civil war. It was in this context that a confused and frightened National Assembly turned to the commanding personality of Charles de Gaulle for national leadership.

Now, four years later, as President and policy director of the new Fifth Republican system which was tailored to his requirements, de Gaulle has settled the crisis which had lifted him to power.

THE TASK AHEAD

But de Gaulle is not satisfied to rest on this laurel. He has always held a grand and almost mystical vision for France—prosperous, politically united in imposing patriotism and internationally proud and influential.

He believes that this kind of French grandeur was irresponsibly retarded by the narrow, selfish and divisive politics of the Third and Fourth Republics, where personal ambition, party haggling and sustained paralysis of constructive leadership by a faction-ridden legislature—the playing of political "games" as he has dubbed it—brought only grief to France.

Algeria's solution now permits France to focus attention on her mission of national resuscitation. But, according to de Gaulle, this task can succeed only if, as has been true since the advent of the Fifth Republic, parliament and the political parties are deprived of effective leverage, the Prime Minister and his cabinet direct the administration of affairs and the massive symbol of President de Gaulle lays down the sweep of policy and builds a fresh public consensus around his person and objectives.

A LOOK FORWARD

Exactly how far such a conception of post-Algeria French politics can be carried, cannot be predicted, but there are visible trends which are bound to intrude in the near future.

• Today France enjoys prosperity and full employment.

• The Fifth Republic has already been able to forestall steep inflation by imposing selected austerity measures,

which, incidentally, would have been politically suicidal under the previous regime.

• The franc has been stabilized, international obligations are being repaid and, in 1961, for the first time since 1927, the country had a favorable balance of payments in her overseas trade.

• Membership in the European Common Market is further stimulating a modernization of production and enlarging the range of consumer products.

FRENCH PROBLEMS

But certain sectors of the French population have been alienated by the government's program and doubly frustrated in finding no political channels through which to retaliate.

The habitually pampered small and inefficient farmers have had their subsidies reduced. Their violent demonstrations, which resulted in the destruction of public property, were met by police intervention and a scolding. The politically enervated National Assembly could bring no pressure on the government and at one point most of its members walked out in piqued protest.

Wages in private industry have been rising rapidly, but the government has permitted only slight increases for underpaid civil servants and workers in nationalized enterprises, fearing inflationary tendencies.

Those parties in the National Assembly which would ordinarily press for a redress, the Communists and Socialists, won 35 per cent of the vote in the 1958 elections, but the prevailing electoral law awarded them only 10 per cent of the seats and prevented any sizeable parliamentary revolt.

Instead, all major French trade unions—Communist, Socialist and Catholic alike—have been resorting to work stoppages, even in the face of a government threat to conscript strikers.

So far the Parliament has not succeeded in blocking any major government programs or overturning a Fifth Republican ministry. Its main and most subservient party, the Union for the New Republic, has no intelligible outlook save to support de Gaulle—who, incidentally, has nearly as much contempt for it as he does for the traditional parties.

DE GAULLE'S WEAPONS

Within the President's armory are many weapons which can be turned against a refractory Parliament—speedy dissolution, invocation of decree powers by the President and circumvention of Parliamentary legislation by direct appeals to the electorate. The

Prime Minister is invested by the President, not the National Assembly, and all ministers must surrender their seats in Parliament once appointed to office.

Indeed, the new Prime Minister, Georges Pompidou, has had absolutely no Parliamentary experience; his only claim to the office is that he is a loyal Gaullist.

PARLIAMENTARY TRENDS

The upshot of these trends is that Parliament is inherently weak and there is a growing detachment between ministers and parliamentarians, heightening the helplessness of the latter.

Even in its weakened condition, Parliament was not willing to chance a full-dress showdown with the government while the Algerian situation was so delicate, so fraught with dangers, so very much reliant on de Gaulle's stature for its resolution.

Nevertheless, Algeria as a French preoccupation is about to be shut down. Grievances continue on other fronts—the farm agitation, industrial wages, aid to church schools, de Gaulle's unnecessarily chauvinistic handling of foreign and defense questions.

RESTIVE FORCES

As de Gaulle works to build an invigorated and united France, the critics of his government's policies are increasingly restive, living as they do under the lid of executive authority. Ideological fractures in a historically divided public probably cannot be overcome in a few short years.

De Gaulle remains personally popular, but his "system" exasperates a large sector of the community which is almost pathologically distrustful of executive leadership at the expense of the "sovereign" public and its spectrum-covering Parliamentary representatives.

At last France has a political system and leadership which are strong, stable and unafraid. Yet France is really many Frances, frequently at odds with one another and temperamentally unprepared to dance around a tri-colored Maypole in happy unison and under the watchful eye of a patronizing ring master.

It has been said of France that, "Within her boundaries, the world's contradictions meet." With the end of the Algerian agony, perhaps even the majestic de Gaulle cannot resolve them.

TODAY ON CAMPUS

No Parking in Area 50
No parking will be permitted in area 50 today because the area will be resurfaced.

Candy Sale
Delta Phi Epsilon sorority will continue its candy sale from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Hetzel Union gameroom.

Senior Ball
The Senior Ball, featuring Larry Elgart and his orchestra, will be held from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. in the HUB ballroom. Tickets are available at the HUB desk.

Center Stage
The Center Stage production of Shaw's "The Man of Destiny" and

Beckett's "Krapp's Last Tape" will take place at 8 p.m.

Lectures
Dr. Norman Spector of the University of Chicago will speak at the NDEA French Institute lecture at 7:30 p.m. at the Home Economics living center. Dr. Spector will lecture in English on "Aspects of Moliere's Comedy: L'Etourdi, and L'Ecole des Femmes."

Meetings
Campus Tournament, 7 p.m., HUB gameroom and main lounge
Football Clinic Lunch, 12-3 p.m., HUB ballroom
Office of Student Aid, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., 218 HUB
Reed Ferguson Tour, 1:30 p.m., 217 HUB

Society to Celebrate 50th Year

The Penn State chapter of Tau Beta Pi, national engineering honorary, will celebrate its 50th anniversary tomorrow.

The celebration will open with tours of the campus and Hammond and Sackett buildings tomorrow morning for the returning alumni. At 1 p.m., The Bent, key of Tau Beta Pi which was recently erected in front of Hammond, will be dedicated and presented to the University.

An initiation ceremony will be held at 4:30 p.m. for Lawrence J. Perez, assistant dean of the College of Engineering and Architecture; Dr. Arthur H. Waynick, head of the Department of Elec-

trical Engineering; Maurice S. Gjesdahl, head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering; and 35 undergraduate engineering students.

The celebration will conclude with a banquet at the Nittany Lion Inn for the alumni, new initiates and members. The principal speaker will be President Eric A. Walker.

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PENN STATE RIDING CLUB HORSE SHOW

MAY 5 & 6

10:00 A.M. Saturday
12:30 P.M. Sunday

Lions Park Rt. 322
2 mi. North of State College

Lunch by Lions Club