

For once let us break the monotony of newsreporting and indulge in diagnosing the situation and in predicting tomorrow's news. Beyond indignation and pity, the present events in Algeria lend themselves to stocktaking and general forecast.

First, we are witnessing in Algeria the penalty that generals and their civilian advisers are paying for not having learned the lesson of French history. Since the Night of St. Bartholomew (1572), through the years of the Fronde (mid-seventeenth century), and the French Revolution itself, the destinies of France have been conducted from and decided by the capital, Paris. The leaders of the religious parties, the nobility fighting Richelieu and Mazarin, the Mirabeaus, Dantons and Robespierres, Napoleon after the Egyptian and the Russian campaigns - all knew that holding Paris means having the country in one's hands. Surrounded by the snow of Muscovy, Napoleon first inquired: "What does Paris think of it?"

It is strange that French officers should ignore this fundamental fact of their country's political life. In April 1961 General Challe apparently dissuaded those who advised him to move on Paris within 24 hours of the revolt, send parachute commandos to the jittery capital which for more than two days was left practically without defense. (Only Prime Minister Michel Debre advised the sleepy citizens on the night of the expected invasion to rush to the airports and fight the landing parachute regiments - which never arrived.)

Gen. Salan's renewed attempt could have had a chance of succeeding only if he had prepared his uprising through contacts in Paris and had planned a joint move on the capital's nerve centers together with other army units. History will tell why Salan failed to do so, why he waited for the signature of the truce, in the first place, why he chose not to profit by the agitation which held metropolitan France in its grips for weeks before and during the Evian negotiations. The fact is, he even stated his determination to avoid a putsch, and to concentrate instead on the exacerba-

tion of feelings in Algeria. He underestimated the impact that the word "peace" has on the minds of civilians and soldiers alike. More important still, he overestimated the Army's readiness to back (or even to arbitrate by abstaining or timing its intervention) a rebellion after the failure, hardly a year ago, of another.

The second thing we must bear in mind is that whatever is going to happen in Algeria, the main scene of events will be metropolitan France. There the issue is far from considered settled. We face there a situation similar to 1945 with its purge of the Right by the Left. When De Gaulle signed the truce, in that very moment the Left won a great victory: for years the Sartres and other fellow-travelers have been clamoring for an FLN victory which would mean that of the popular front in France. Today the Left: the Communists, the PSU of Mendes-France, the huge, Communist-led CGT labor union may indeed be optimistic: thousands of "Rightists" are in jail, concentration camps, or otherwise neutralised; the army is literally beheaded, deprived of its best officers from generals to lieutenants, its morale definitely broken. The contingent in Algeria has just proved that it obeys De Gaulle unconditionally.

The Left will not miss this opportunity and will show no generosity after four years' fright. It will move to further purge the army of its national-minded officers, and to create a situation in the country in which the repatriated Algerians will be politically impotent. For years the Left dreaded these pieds-noirs and the voting strength they would add to right-wing parties. The Left knows full well that ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~may~~, behind a De Gaulle powerless to strike out against them, it cannot lose one single day in turning France into the country of their dream...