

GREAT DECISIONS

Topic 3

What U.S. Policy For North Africa?

THE PROBLEM
 French North Africa, a Moslem domain stretching along a thousand mile coastline from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, flanks the Straits of Gibraltar and faces the underbelly of Europe. Along the top of this continent, during World War II, the armies of Hitler fought for control of the Mediterranean sea and the Middle East . . . and lost.

Now new battles rage between Arabs and Frenchmen for freedom and independence . . . against political chaos and economic collapse.

The U.S., especially say, has an important stake in these political and military skirmishes. There are four strategic U.S. air bases in North Africa; the region supplies us with essential minerals; and both sides in the conflict are important U.S. friends.

The U.S. sees France, one of her key allies in Western Europe, torn by internal dissension, drained of money and troops, trying unsuccessfully to put down widespread revolts. In the past 18 months, three French cabinets have fallen, each time in debates largely concerned with North African policy. The near paralysis of French government encourages French communists and fascists and gave to both greatly increased strength in the January elections.

Arabs of the region also are looked on as friends and allies. We understand their ambitions for self-government; we recognize they are part of an influential Moslem civilization that stretches from North Africa through the Middle East, Iran and the Philippines.

Where are France and North Africa going in 1956? What can—or should the U.S. do in this crisis? Here are the background facts.

THE BACKGROUND

French North Africa is three separate entities — two protectorates, Morocco in the West and Tunisia in the East, theoretically nations under the "protection" of France, and, between them, the vast territory of Algeria. The latter is considered a part of France, elects representatives to the national parliament in Paris and enjoys the privileges of French citizenship.

In the other two, France handles all external affairs and key internal affairs, such as defense and police security.

The following facts help to understand the whole problem of violence and terror, nationalism, reform and compromise in North Africa.

Tunisia
 France established a protectorate over Tunisia in 1881. The country had been a weakly supervised province of the old Ottoman (Turkish) empire and had never developed its own strong pattern of government.

During 70 years of French administration, Tunisia made considerable economic progress. The population has doubled and the country's agriculture is relatively prosperous. Tunisian mines are now supplying the western allies with vital strategic materials such as phosphates, cobalt and manganese.

French Control
 The pattern of government in Tunisia has been a kind of partnership between the French resident-general and the Bey of Tunis. The resident-general is the ultimate authority, appointed by Paris. French support is strongest in the rural areas, where the French administration received a 60 per cent majority in the 1953 election.

Independence Movement
 A well-organized nationalist party, the Neo-Destour (new constitution), has operated in Tunisia since before World War I. It stands for Tunisian independence but is not a revolutionary party advocating violence.

The party president, Habib Bourguiba, is a moderate, Paris-trained lawyer who appears willing to compromise in stages on the road to independence. France outlawed the Neo-Destour in 1934 and Bourguiba has been in and out of French prisons for 20 years. Yet France continues to negotiate with him and his party and he is currently head of the Tunisian government.

Neo-Destour strength is concentrated in the cities and works closely with the Tunisian labor movement.

In 1950-51, in response to a long list of Neo-Destour demands, France introduced re-

forms by top administrative Tunisians to appointing more posts. In December, 1952, the first national elections were held, followed by municipal and rural elections in 1953.

Since French reforms still fell far short of Neo-Destour demands, the party called for a national boycott of the elections. Only in the cities did voters respond to the boycott. In rural areas the vote was strongly pro-French and the administration secured a national majority. Violence and imprisonment of Neo-Destour leaders marked the entire attempted compromise period.

One of the bitterest points of difference between the French and the nationalists is the question of political rights of European settlers in Tunisia. The European element comprising 10 per cent of the total population occupies the key economic position, paying heavy taxes. They insist on political representation in proportion to their influence rather than number.

Stepped up reforms and recent compromises in Tunisia stem from the July, 1954, promise of French Premier Mendes-France for Tunisian home rule and eventual independence. Positive steps were taken in this direction but, in Feb., 1955, the Voted-France government was ousted from power on the basis of its moderate policy toward Tunisia.

Morocco

A country about the size of California, Morocco has been a French protectorate since 1912. Spain also acquired at the same time similar status in a smaller area known as Spanish Morocco. In theory the sultan of Morocco rules over both zones and over the International Zone on Tangier on the Mediterranean coast. Actually, his effective domain is limited to the French protectorate.

French Control

French administration of Morocco, as in Tunisia, has been based on the principle of partnership between the French resident-general and a cooperative sultan. France also has relied heavily on the friendly support of the rural population. Feudal religious-political leaders have until recently delivered the support of nearly 70 per cent of the entire Moroccan population. With the growth of nationalism in recent years, "backwoods" support of the French administration has become less reliable and consistent.

Independence Movement

The nationalist or independence movement in Morocco concentrates its power in the cities. The fiercely nationalistic Istiqlal party was launched in 1944 with the issuance of a revolutionary manifesto demanding immediate and complete independence.

Until 1947 Sultan Sidi Mohamed ben Youssef cooperated with the French government and helped keep the Istiqlal under control. In that year—perhaps as a result of the post war spread of anticolonial sentiment—the sultan announced open support for the Istiqlal independence movement.

In 1950, while on a state visit to Paris, he demanded abrogation of the 1912 treaty which had set up the protectorate. French reaction — no compromise — was prompt and firm.

In the succeeding three years, with the sultan's support, the Istiqlal gained in membership and influence throughout the country, making serious inroads into formerly pro-French elements.

As the French countered with political and economic reforms to meet local demands, the Istiqlal leaders and the sultan combined forces to sabotage the reforms. They did not want compromise; they demanded independence.

On Aug. 20, 1953, the French government forced the sultan into exile and placed on the throne a more cooperative, Sidi Mohammed ben Moulay Arafat. The Istiqlal was outlawed. Terrorism and guerrilla warfare broke out in Morocco and continued throughout autumn of last year.

The nationalists refused to compromise on anything short of the sultan's restoration and the election of an all-Moroccan assembly. French efforts to stamp out the rebellion by force failed. Even the tarest compromises advanced by Paris raised bitter objections from the third of a million French colonists (settlers) in Morocco.

Last year the exiled Sultan was permitted to return to his throne and France promised reforms similar to those already granted in Tunisia.

The largest of France's North African territories was acquired in 1830 by a military expedition. It too had been a part of the Ottoman empire. From the earliest days French policy was assimilation, integrating the country with France politically and economically. At great expense to France, Algeria's agriculture, industry, mining and social institutions were developed. French Europeans — transplanted themselves to Algeria and new generations grew up thinking of the country as their own-France-in-Africa.

Independence Movement
 Algerian resistance to France continued for 80 years after the annexation but, by 1910, the entire country was under French military control. The Southern Territories, on the borders of the Sahara desert, are still under French military government. Only the coastal departments are under civil administration.

In the wave of anti-colonialism that swept the world after World War II, Algerian nationalism broke out again in violence, terrorism and an ultimatum for independence. In 1945 an estimated 40,000-45,000 Algerians were killed by French troops attempting to control the rebellion. The violence led in 1947 to a major French compromise—the Organic Statute of Algeria.

Reforms
 Under the new law, Algeria has obtained limited self-government in the form of an Algerian assembly. One house is dominated by Algerians of European extraction; the other, by Algerian Moslems. All legislative acts of the assembly are subject to the approval of the resident-general appointed by Paris.

Underlying the reform — and all subsequent French actions — is the concept that this territory is an integral part of metropolitan France, like Brittany or Provence on the mainland . . . not a territory, not a colony, but part and parcel of the French Union, with the rights and privileges of French citizenship.

Algeria elects representatives to the national legislature in Paris and participates in the government of the entire French Union. This, French nationalists explain, makes "nationalism" in Algeria an impossibility. . . any talk of Algerian "independence" is clearly rebellion against the French State.

Algerian nationalists, on the other hand, maintain that this legal concept is itself a fiction, that Algeria does not enjoy promise of representation in the national legislature and that Algerian Moslems are second-class French citizens.

They point to the manner in which Algerian senators and deputies to Paris are elected . . .

assuring the one million European Algerians equal voice with 10,000,000 Moslem Algerians. They point a swivel to French government control over Moslem mosques, to European control over finance and industry, French tariffs on Algerian goods and differences in wages and educational opportunities between Algerians of European extraction and of the Moslem faith.

Divisions Within

If the issues were clear-cut between Moslems and Frenchmen, the solutions might be simpler. But there are great differences in point of view among Frenchmen on the one hand and among Moslems on the other.

The French colonists vigorously oppose any reforms which will weaken Algeria's ties with France or diminish their influence in the Algerian government. In the national parliament in Paris the colonists are supported by rightwing legislators. Moderates in the legislature seek a compromise. Leftwing legislators, especially Communists, are willing to see Algeria drift closer to independence or autonomy.

Among the Arabs there are extremists who will settle for nothing less than complete independence; moderates who ask only equal status with the European colonists; and pro-French Moslems who fear the consequences of French withdrawal from Algeria.

The crisis is at its peak now. One French government already has collapsed because of its Algerian policy . . . others may follow.

Different groups of Algerian nationalists have at different times made a wide variety of demands on France. The nationalist leaders generally considered to be the most responsible, however, have made demands which boil down to four points:

1. Establishment of a sovereign Algerian national assembly, to be elected by universal suffrage (male and female, Arab and European, Christian and Moslem).

2. Release of all political prisoners held by France.

3. Restoration of full civil liberties suspended during the emergency.

4. Negotiation between France and the national assembly for the future status of Algeria.

The two principal nationalist parties (the movement is not so unified nor so strong as it is in Tunisia and Morocco) are: the Triumph of Democratic Liberties party, which advocates complete independence, and the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto, which advocates internal autonomy within the French Union.

WHERE IS NORTH AFRICA GOING IN 1956?

The native population of French North Africa includes about 18,000,000 Berbers and Arabs of the Moslem faith and about 500,000 Jews. There are also about 1,500,000 European settlers, mostly of French origin.

By agreement between the U.S. and France in 1950, the U.S. was permitted to build five air bases and to maintain 7,000 Air Force troops in Morocco. France, in turn, was to provide 200 guards for each base. So far, the U.S. has built four bases. The U.S. Air Force says the ceiling on personnel set by the agreement is too low for effective maintenance and operation of the bases.

Can we deal with French North Africa as a single problem . . . or are Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria three distinct problems? What are the similarities and differences? Do French reforms or repressions in one territory seem to influence nationalist activities in the others? How real is France's claim that Algeria is a part of metropolitan France? What effect does this concept have on French policy? Would complete assimilation of Algeria

into France, with full equality of French and Moslems be possible . . . or desirable?

Are the independence movements in Morocco and Tunisia irresistible? If France "pulled out" completely this year, what would happen to these countries a) economically? b) politically? How would this affect France's economy? . . . her importance as a world power? Is North Africa simply a problem of colonialism vs. nationalism? Or are other factors at stake. If so, what?

Is North Africa strategically important to the U.S.? Is France's dilemma important to the U.S. . . . does it affect European defenses or the strength of the anti-communist alliance? How will U.S. action or inaction be interpreted in the rest of the world?

The Arab states in the Middle East are strongly sympathetic to the nationalists in North Africa. So are other newly independent peoples in Asia and Africa. Russia supports Arab self-determination. Are these facts important to the U.S. in our North African policy?

WHAT ARE OUR CHOICES?

Should the U.S. interfere, or keep hands off? In U.N. debates on North Africa the U.S. has consistently abstained from voting. Can we afford to take sides openly in these controversies? If so, which side? Why?

Should the U.S. attempt to apply pressure quietly, behind the scenes? Under what circumstances—if any—should the U.S. support France openly in North Africa? Under what circumstances—if any—should the U.S. openly support the Arab nationalists? What kind of settlement in North Africa would best suit U.S. interests? Should the U.S. do anything to bring about such a settlement?

A partner in NATO, France is using troops in Algeria which

Sunday, April 8, 1956

MEDFORD (OREGON) MAIL TRIBUNE—FIVE

Woodcock Installed As Ruler of Elks

Dick Woodcock was installed as exalted ruler of the Medford Elks lodge at the annual meeting of the organization last week, held following the annual crab feed at the Elks temple.

Franklin H. Van Pelt, former exalted ruler, served as acting officer during the installation ceremony, with other past exalted rulers assisting as acting grand officers.

Newly-installed officers include Galen R. Knox, esteemed



DICK WOODCOCK
Elks Exalted Ruler

are under NATO command, withdrawn from Western defense bases in Europe. Should we insist these troops be returned? On this basis could we dictate a French compromise? Should we?

YOUR OPINION COUNTS

Whatever policy the U.S. adopts in North Africa in 1956, it should be a policy based on informed opinions of the American people. What you believe—on the basis of study and discussion—is important to U.S. policy makers in Washington.

The "Great Decisions" program offers a way that individual opinions may be heard and noted.

The Great Decisions committee will receive letters, or the ballots included in the fact sheets, to be tabulated. The results will be forwarded to the U.S. Department of State and to our representatives in Congress.

The material above is a condensation of the fact sheets prepared for use in the Great Decisions program.

DIES OF INJURIES

Longview, Wash.—(U.P.)—Gene W. Maddock, 36, Longview, died in a local hospital Friday from injuries suffered in a two-car accident Wednesday night on the Ocean Beach highway near the Clewitt-Wanktatum county line.

Dead line Sunday Classified in afternoon Saturday, 10 a.m. Monday for Monday; other days 5:30 previous day.

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