



522 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK 36, N.Y.

## NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

A Letter from Charles F. Gallagher

Tangier  
August 12, 1958

The publication in these pages is one of a continuing series from AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES FIELD STAFF correspondents on current developments in world affairs.

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As might have been expected, North Africa has been deeply shaken by recent events in the Middle East which reached a climax with the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy and the landing of American and British troops in Lebanon and Jordan respectively. It has been directly affected by the little-publicized sending of British forces to Cyrenaica, a move designed in theory to prevent another regicide, this time in the Kingdom of Libya; it feels it has been compromised by the existence of airbases which, according to popularly-believed rumor in Morocco, were used by American forces headed for what is referred to in the local press as the "aggression in Lebanon."

North Africa has been concerned with the Middle East crisis as a region of young states most of which still fear and react violently to colonialism, neo-colonialism or any sign of outside interference in the affairs of smaller and weaker countries. And, most importantly, in terms of its membership in the Arab community, it has been stirred not only by fraternal feelings of Arab nationalism but, more specifically, just as the younger brother watches his elders and takes his cues from their behavior; it has been deeply impressed by the revolution which brought the republic to Iraq. In some ways indeed, and for some groups, the shock was too startling for comfort, and the face of North Africa, as well as of the Arab East, has been permanently marked by the events of July 14 and thereafter.

PHILLIPS TALBOT  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

During the past year or so the North African view of the Middle East and of its own place in the Arab world has been changing. The pace of this change is now accelerating after a slow start, to the extent that a Middle Easterner who returned here after a visit in 1957 remarked that he noticed a decade of difference between his two trips. He was referring to the improving quality of the Arabic-language press and radio, the amount of general arabization, and the all-round higher cultural level in arabist frames of reference.

These impressions can be confirmed in a negative way, too. If to a Middle Easterner North Africa seems to be becoming more like his own region, seen from the specific point of view of a Westerner, North Africa has recently been moving away from the West at breakneck speed. Intellectual opinion, and especially the opinion of the younger generation upon which I commented last year (cf. CFG-10-'57 "Thoughts from Tunis"), shows an increasing hostility toward the West and a disturbing tendency to misunderstand or distort what most Westerners consider to be the truth, even in those relatively rare cases where something good might be said for Western policy vis-à-vis the Arab world.

There are many reasons for this anti-Western drift. They range from the inevitable historic pull of Arab nationalism (with the tendency to imitate policies practiced by Middle Eastern countries with notable success) to the general decline of the West in Afro-Asian eyes in recent years. The particular loss of prestige by the United States since the beginning of the Sputnik era, something which Americans living abroad are quite conscious of, has been an important factor. But local conditions in North Africa in the first six months of 1958 have also further shaped anti-Western attitudes. The continuing presence of foreign troops, in one form or another, in all four countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya contrasted sharply in North African eyes with the "true independence" of the Middle East, at least that part of it which had heeded the call of Abdel Nasser. The aggravation of the

CHARLES F. GALLAGHER has since 1951 been a student of the affairs of Northwest Africa. He started his higher education at the University of California just after Pearl Harbor and soon was shifted to the Japanese language school at Boulder, Colo. He served out the war as an officer in the Navy and then became fine arts advisor on Japanese cultural property during the occupation of Japan. In 1949 he entered Harvard University to major in Far Eastern languages and history. He was graduated *summa cum laude* in 1951. Subsequently he was twice offered Harvard-Yenching fellowships to continue in the Far Eastern field, but decided instead to study Islamic society. Under Fulbright and Ford fellowships, he worked for two years in Paris and three years in North Africa. After completing his research in Rabat, he settled in Tangier to write a history of Morocco and a grammar of Maghrebian Arabic. He joined the AUFS in July 1956 as a staff member and participated in the 1956-57 program of visits to member institutions. In the summer of 1957 he returned to North Africa under AUFS auspices.

Algerian question beginning with the Sakiet attack in February, the seeming endlessness of the revolution, the internal strains of Morocco as it began to shakedown into something like left and right political groupings, and the festering economic problems all contributed to the mood of irritated frustration which dominated the Maghreb early this summer.

To a North Africa in this spirit the revolution in Iraq came as a mirror suddenly held up with the image of the future in it; and, depending on which side of the political fence one found oneself, it presented either a horrifying outline of the future or an inevitable and satisfactory pattern of things to come. The lesson was lost on none, however, and it would hardly be rash to suggest that Morocco, in particular, has moved forward -- using the word to suggest movement along a path whose lines are already laid out in general, without any necessary connotation of progress -- at least five years in the past month.

Although all North Africa was disturbed by the Iraqi revolution, Morocco, as the principal monarchy remaining in the Arab world (and a still absolute monarchy in theory), was the country most vulnerable. The silence of the palace in Rabat immediately after the coup d'état was one sign of its disarray, but even more significant was the fact that the court omitted the traditional mourning for the death of King Feisal. King Idris of Libya decreed fourteen days, and even non-Arab, non-monarchic states such as Pakistan lowered the flag for a short period. In view of the closeness of Moroccan royal ties with Iraq -- King Feisal had been the first Arab head of state to come to post-independence Morocco, and persistent rumors at one time linked his name with the King's eldest daughter, Lalla Aisha -- the official silence would have been surprising if one did not keep in mind that the King is a very practical politician who knows when to keep his distances.

The cautious position of the palace was dictated in large measure by the sharpened struggle of internal politics in Morocco in the past few months. Brusque changes in the political climate were noticeable right after the late April conference in Tangier, a meeting of the leading political organizations of each of the three North African countries (Istiqlal, FLN, and neo-Destour). Although subsequent events have watered down many of the hopes of springtime, the success of the conference at the time, (and it was a gathering of parties not of governments) encouraged the Istiqlal to bring down the coalition government in which it had been playing a leading role and to demand a one-party cabinet. After long discussions with the palace, in which each side recognized the importance of its public relations, a compromise was agreed to which satisfied few: the Istiqlal received its homogeneous government, but the King reserved the prerogative of choosing certain key ministers, notably the Minister of the Interior. Ahmed Balafrej, the top figure of the Istiqlal conservative, or moderate wing, was named Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and a somewhat staid cabinet was grouped around him. The

importance of the King did not diminish and the Crown Prince, Mulay Hassan, was even more active than before. Without being officially announced, the split of the Istiqlal into something like a left- and right-wing separation was consummated. Grumblings from the excluded left wing (headed by the Speaker of the Consultative Assembly and Deputy Secretary of the Party, Mehdi Ben Barka; the ex-Minister of the Interior, Driss M'hammedi; and the ex-Minister of Labor, Abdallah Ibrahim) were co-ordinated with sharp attacks on governmental policy, both internal and external, by the Moroccan Labor Union (UMT) and, for the first time, by oblique references to the monarchy, which were repudiated by their authors as soon as challenged. In June the party's French-language weekly, Al Istiqlal, edited by Ben Barka and his followers, was suspended after its editorials threatened to get out of hand, and it has just reappeared under new party control. Interestingly, a statement issued by Ben Barka on the occasion of the reappearance, explaining why he could no longer associate himself with a paper which presented only one part of the party's views, was neither published nor broadcast in Morocco.

A good many middle-of-the-road Istiqlalians were, and still are, trying to preserve the theory of party unity, as well as that of complete party-palace harmony, and the solidarity of the party with the UMT. "The unity of the vital forces of the nation," it is called. But it has long been evident to most observers here that the multifold tendencies encased in the Istiqlal itself -- it has been described as a "grouping of personalities" -- not to mention the divergences between the supporters of the throne and the quasi-Marxist views of leaders of the UMT, would not allow the vital forces to go much farther along the same road. To the Ben Barka group, which stands for a program best described as internal reform, including primarily land reform, and external neutralism, i.e., friendly relations with both East and West, removal of foreign troops and bases, and a foreign policy of "nondependence," the question is, in the words of Ben Barka himself, "whether the Istiqlal will be the Wafd of Morocco or not." The parallel has to do with the pre-revolutionary party in Egypt which, corrupt and, "burdened with bourgeois inertia" was swept away by the military junta in 1952.

The parallel does not extend, however, to the monarchy in Morocco. Muhammad V is certainly not Farouk, nor, as the comparison might be formulated these days, is he Feisal or Hussein. He remains a powerful figure, both because he is sincerely loved by a great majority of his countrymen, particularly in the countryside, and because he combines the prestige of a religious figure in a country where Islam counts for much more than it does in the advanced Middle Eastern countries, with the skill of a shrewd political manager. He has managed to identify himself since his 1953 exile with the cause of nationalism and progress in his country, and he continues to do so. His new charter for the nation, a sort of political platform announcing a series of reforms, was carefully designed to spread the impression, just at the time of the May cabinet crisis, that the royal solicitude continued in the service of the people, regardless of which governments came and went. With the personal loyalty of the majority of his subjects assured, with firm control of the army and the police, and

with an ability to play off political party leaders against each other while remaining aloof from the game, Muhammad V is still in a very strong, almost unassailable position. This feeling of esteem, though, is becoming more and more personally-oriented rather than directed to the institution of monarchy, and for this reason the post-Iraq reactions of parts of the opposition organizations were especially meaningful.

Reactions were not long in forthcoming from these sources. The official organ of the Istiqlal, Al Alam, led the way in the days following the coup with what seemed to be a systematic campaign to denigrate the monarchy...in Iraq. The paper referred casually to the "death of Feisal" (mawt Faysal), as if it had been the accidental demise of a private citizen and not the assassination of the head of a very friendly state. Similarly no title was ever given the King of Jordan, who was referred to simply as Hussein. Editorials spoke of the "Iraqi people breaking their chains" and the front page was given over to photographs of joyous citizens in Baghdad. Even some Istiqlal ministers were outraged at Al Alam's publication of the photograph of Dr. Fadhil Jamali, ex-Foreign Minister of Iraq, handcuffed in jail, when he had been, according to one cabinet member, "one of Morocco's best friends in her fight for independence."

Other instruments of the left-wing coalition joined in. (Al Alam itself was being directed at this time by the Ben Barka group.) At Tali'a, the weekly of the UMT, which has been distinguishing itself by the violence of its anti-American comment recently, made an attack of unusual bitterness on the Hashemite dynasty in Baghdad. And Ash Shabab, the organ of the Istiqlal Youth, saluted the "new-found freedom of the Iraqi people" and coupled this with a call for the transformation of the National Consultative Assembly, now appointed by the King, into an elected parliamentary body. The Assembly is not, however, despite its nominative condition, a rubber-stamp organization. Under the skillful stewardship of Ben Barka, who first last year produced from the same assembly a policy of "nondependence," it passed a resolution as early as July 18 calling for the recognition of the Iraqi Republic. The government quietly took its advice and acted a few days later.

Al Alam's anti-royalist innuendos continued for the better part of a week until it was recalled to order and allowed its special envoy in Baghdad to report the statement of Abdel Kerim Kassim, the new Iraqi chief of government, that "If all the kings in the Muslim world were as devoted to their countries as Muhammad V there would have been no problem in Iraq." Since then, Al Alam, after a shifting of personnel, has hewed to the party line and notably has restored the activities and receptions of the King to their former place of priority.

Between the silence of the palace and the first effusive cries of the opposition, there was the action of the hidden wheels of the government. Steps were quietly taken to soften some of the

effects of the revolution: the press and radio were unofficially advised that photographs of mob violence were needless and should be avoided, and that no details of the regicide could be printed. When the Moroccan Students' Union (UMET) met in Tetuan late last month and went as far as it is possible to go in this country by publishing a series of resolutions which, in addition to the expected "anti-imperialist," anti-Western paragraphs, decried "anti-national" elements in the armed forces, and called for a strict separation of the civilian and military authority within the defense forces (an Istiqlal minister is Minister of National Defense and Crown Prince Mulay Hassan is Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces), security police took energetic measures to stop diffusion of the communiqué within Morocco. A few days later, it was arranged for UMET leaders to be received by the King and for them to pledge their unswerving allegiance to the throne. This face-saving apology has, for the moment, smoothed matters over; the banned communiqué even found its way into print in the new, more orthodox version of Al Istiqlal which has now reappeared.

The attitude of the student group is perhaps the most striking index of how things are going. To illustrate it personally, I had several good friends among students here three to four years ago, just before and at the time of independence. The memory of pleasant hours spent discussing politics and the future, often not without frank disagreement, still remains; a year ago I found many who could no longer be reached, but there were still some of the younger generation who remained relatively open. They are almost undiscoverable now, and one begins to get a mass reaction from behind an invisible wall which views everything, and everyone, in stereotyped national terms and hollow, third-hand slogans. In addition to the burning dissatisfaction with the West, there is the aura of "smartness" surrounding Communism for many youths who have not the slightest understanding of it. It would be pleasant to dismiss these attitudes as the passing fancies of the young, but the trend of educated youth in Morocco in the recent past, together with the continuing total lack of understanding of Arab nationalism on the part of the West, almost insures that both sides will separate further. And it should be kept in mind that the young men who drafted the Tetuan resolutions will soon be in government service and within five to ten years will be making at least medium-level policy for a country where youth is learning that, owing to the scholastic gap which preceded its present generation, it attains great power at an early age.

Algerian reaction, as expressed by the National Liberation Front (FLN), has been, if anything, more violent than the extremist Moroccan position, but the object of the attack has been different. To Algerians the enemy is the imperialist West, and, for the first time, the United States occupies the place of honor. To be sure, in all the Moroccan press comment on the Middle East there was strong disapproval of the Anglo-American "invasion" (ghazw), but all in all it was moderate in tone. Morocco's real reactions concerned internal Arab politics; it reacted as a monarchy to the fall of a monarchy, and it kept seeing itself in the

place of Iraq. None of this was true for the Algerians who, if nothing else, are republicans who have long since dismissed even the monarchy in Morocco in their private conversations. The FLN had been financially supported by the old regime in Iraq and it would continue to be helped by the revolutionaries, but it has not forgotten that its principal backer is now Abdel Nasser and in proportion as he and his principles become stronger, the FLN gains as well.

The FLN position was revealed a few days after the July 14 crisis in a declaration of policy which was scheduled to be read during the "Voice of Algeria" hour broadcast by the Rabat and Tunis radios. The statement was an unusually stinging attack on the United States which, after conniving with France to keep liberty from North Africa, had "finally dropped its mask and revealed itself as a predatory, imperialist power" in the Middle East. The statement was slipped through on the Rabat radio, but in Tunis the "Voice of Algeria" was not released; and when Algerian sources asked Radio Tangier, a private, American-run station, to put it on the air, embarrassed conferences resulted in a toned-down version being broadcast.

The disenchantment of Algerian nationalists with the United States had been growing for some time, but it became irrevocable after Sakiet Sidi Youssef, when it became apparent that, for their purposes, the Murphy mission of good offices was a failure and that the Anglo-American policy of friendship toward Tunisia was not to mean overt interference in the Algerian revolution. Their dissatisfaction with the politics of the Western bloc was heightened by increased military frustration, as crossings of the Morice Line, an electrically-charged barbed-wire area separating Algeria from Tunisia, became more and more difficult this spring. All reliable reports indicate that the military situation of the FLN, as distinct from its terrorist activities which continue unabated, has much deteriorated in the last six months.

The FLN's answer to the new situation created by Sakiet and its military setbacks was political: to press for Maghrebian unity and to involve Morocco and Tunisia in the struggle as much as possible. This was the fundamental point of the Tangier Conference in April, and the amount of co-operation which was agreed upon showed that the leading parties in Morocco and Tunisia were unwilling and unable to disassociate themselves from the FLN in the eyes of their own public opinion, even though in private a good many politicians of both these countries criticized both the methods and the orientation of the Algerian rebels.

The paper gains of the Tangier Conference, providing for the setting-up of a consultative executive and the eventual establishment of an all-Maghreb assembly, were made of doubtful value almost immediately, however, by the May 13 coup in Algiers which led, ultimately, to the end of the Fourth Republic and the advent of General de Gaulle to power. Since then the situation both in Algeria and in France has been anything but clear, but gradually

it is becoming evident that the "Revolution of Algiers" did nothing to settle the fate of Algeria.

Hesitant during the month or so when de Gaulle represented all things to all men, FLN reaction since then has been sporadic and ineffective, although lately terrorism has rebegun on a large scale. Although almost all the fraternization reported just after the coup was physically or psychologically forced, there was for a short time a wan hope among some of the Algerians, now vanished, that a just solution to their grievances might be found by the General. As this hope disappeared, the FLN, which had certainly been taken aback by the sudden change of climate in Algeria, began to regain the momentum lost during the early summer months and the war took on a renewed earnestness.

The Algerian reaction has been complicated by its relations with Tunisia, the intellectual cornerstone of North Africa, which had been moved in another direction by the summer's events. In any assessment of Tunisia the equation "Tunisia equals Bourguiba" must still be considered valid, even though the President has lost a part of his appeal in the last six months. It is still he who gives the essential stamp to the Tunisian political character, although the Tunisian elite which is probably more occidentalized in the methodology of its thought than any similar Arab group, is predisposed to understand more easily the nuances of colonial disengagement and thus to accept Bourguiba's refusal to denounce Anglo-American action in the Middle East as aggression of the same type as Soviet action in Hungary.

In his relationship with the new Gaullist France, Bourguiba feels, and has publicly given expression to, his sympathy toward de Gaulle as a man akin to himself -- the only figure capable of leading his country, a strong, resolute governor but a man who knows the value of compromise and understands his opponent; in short, a liberal autocrat. The speed with which agreement was reached on the evacuation of French troops from all Tunisia save the naval base of Bizerte, and the more important accord on the establishment of an oil pipeline from the Saharan fields at Edjelé (Algeria) to the Tunisian coastal region of Gabès (see CFG-1-'58, "Oil and the Future of the Sahara") reflect the mutual esteem of the two men which has brought about a considerable Franco-Tunisian rapprochement in the past three months.

The evacuation agreement, coming shortly after the Tangier Conference, was the first obstacle to harmonious relations between Tunisia and the FLN. To be sure, there had been clear signs for some time that the counsels of moderation given by Bourguiba to the FLN were being dismissed with a shrug, but the FLN was content to be lectured to from time to time as long as it possessed base facilities on Tunisian soil and continued to direct practical operations itself. In theory the FLN rallied to the evacuation agreement -- for would it not give a freer hand within supposedly neutral Tunisia (in which the Algerians had carved out a practically autonomous state in the western provinces)? It also



promised to eliminate the irksome radar posts in French-controlled airfields in Tunisia, which could spot planes heading for the Algerian border to make parachute drops. But, at the last minute, the FLN became aware of the fact that the French garrisons would be evacuated to Algeria, there to help make up the added contingents necessary for the "final offensive" to crush the rebels.

In addition, the success of de Gaulle in solving the major outstanding problems with Tunisia in so short a time, while the FLN military position was deteriorating inside Algeria, upset rebel leaders. Nor was the FLN overly pleased with the results of the follow-up to the Tangier Conference, held in Tunis late in June. Word of the impending pipeline agreement had already leaked out; the Tunis meeting produced no immediate results and considerable coldness was in evidence.

When a Moroccan mission arrived in Tunisia in July to negotiate a cultural convention between the two independent states of the Maghreb, part of FLN opinion began to feel with a sense of outrage and panic that North Africa was on the way to being built without Algeria, and that the French, diabolical as ever in FLN eyes, were succeeding in buying off Tunisia and Morocco with economic bribes while refusing the smallest concession to the Algerians.

This FLN view is an oversimplification, but there is a certain justice in it. For the Algerian question remains on all levels a question of force, and there are responsible men in the Moroccan and Tunisian governments who feel it necessary to get on with the economic and social problems in their respective countries. "Independence before bread" is the FLN slogan, but it is hardly one which can be adhered to by Moroccan and Tunisian statesmen if it looks clearly as though the French could stay in Algeria for five or ten years, or even indefinitely. There has never been any satisfactory solution to the North African dilemma posed by FLN insistence that if it goes down all must go with it, and the genuine desire of the Moroccans and Tunisians to help Algeria up to, but not beyond the brink of, self-ruin. What seems tragically inevitable now is that the logic of its extremist position will force the FLN to push total involvement of its neighbors at any cost, and it remains to be seen whether any reasonable Arab government (i.e., what the West considers reasonable) can resist the pressures that will be put on it.

Thus the Iraqi coup was received by the FLN with satisfaction. It confirmed them in their earlier decision that Abdel Nasser was the right man to bet on, the only one who, in the long run, could be of continuing substantial help to them. As Nasser's closest friends in North Africa -- Egyptian relations with Morocco are good but not excellent, with Tunisia are fair but not good -- their position was enhanced. The monarchy in Morocco had received a blow which left the Algerians indifferent, and they felt that events might serve as a political warning to Bourguiba of the dangers of too close association with the declining West.

The time for direct action had come for the FLN, and an open attack on Tunisian policy regarding the Edjelé pipeline was written in Al Moujahid, the official FLN weekly published in Tunis. It was answered in measured terms a week later by L'Action, the influential neo-Destour paper, which insisted upon Tunisia's right to secure its economic development and suggested that the construction of a pipeline would in the long run benefit an independent Algeria as much as it would now help Tunisia. The Tunisian thesis is that if Algeria is not free when the pipeline is completed, no oil will be allowed to flow through it, and that the agreement gives work to the unemployed and two years (until completion) to worry about future negotiations -- an ingenious bit of reasoning designed to put the best face on an accord made primarily out of economic necessity.

The counterattack of Al Moujahid was never delivered; forewarned of an article likely to be offensive to the Tunisian state, the police seized the plates of the next issue in its Tunis printing plant and forbade publication. Since then relations have considerably worsened between the two disputing parties and the FLN has invoked one of the principles of the Tangier Conference to call for a meeting of the Consultative Committee. Recently two of its top men have been in Rabat seeking Moroccan support on this issue, which threatens further to divide the government here and confirm the instability of the present Moroccan political scene.

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The implications of the new, post-July 14 North Africa are serious and far-reaching. The outstanding single fact is that the strength of what Westerners often call "intransigent" or "radical" nationalism, which is generally what the Arabs feel to be their most progressive nationalism, has been revealed; and it bids fair to make great progress in the near future.

And paradoxically, at the time that much is being said about unity in this region, and throughout the Arab world, there is more division and quarreling than before. It should be remarked, however, that the divisions exist on a governmental level rather than among the people; because of this, as we have just seen in the case of Iraq, there is an essential superficiality to them which may be swept away at any time. Internally there are reactionaries, staunch conservatives, empiric liberals and discontented radicals, and in questions of foreign policy there are pro-Western groups, nondependent neutralists, "positive" neutralists, and some who are more than willing to flirt with the Eastern bloc. And while there is no complete correlation between the two groups, one so often finds only the reactionaries and conservatives among the pro-Westerners, and it is honestly impossible to feel that these are the dynamic forces in their respective countries.

This is admittedly not the case in Tunisia, where the

Bourguiba government is quite advanced in its internal social policies. But there the question is whether attachment to the West, which is becoming almost the kiss of death for any Arab public figure, will not be enough to undermine a government which is moving steadily into the FLN-Abdel Nasser squeeze play which I described last fall. The economic relief that might once have remedied the plight of Tunisia and given it the beginnings of a unique prestige in the Arab world has not been forthcoming. Some of the decline of the President's popularity can be laid to this economic stagnation, but on the whole it is a secondary factor. It is his pro-occidental foreign policy which is beginning to be the stain on his record as far as most North Africans are concerned, and, in this connection, it cannot be too often repeated that the fundamental problems of the Arab countries are political problems and not economic or social issues.

There are now indications that the Middle Eastern policy of the United States is belatedly coming around to arranging a modus vivendi with Arab nationalism as represented by Abdel Nasser. This may not be so easily done as long as the problem of Israel remains in Arab eyes the overriding question, but it is obvious that a new approach is needed. Sooner or later, and probably much sooner than anyone thinks, the same kind of policy decisions, requiring arrangements with a neutralist North Africa, will have to be made here. They will be difficult as long as the Algerian question is unsettled, and if it is allowed to go on unsettled it may bring something in the end worse than objective neutralism. Already the question of American bases in Morocco has been vitiated by uselessly protracted negotiations and inept public relations to the point where the remaining friends of America in the Moroccan government urge the signing of an agreement to withdraw as the only means of keeping the bases even temporarily. It is certain that no Moroccan government could now negotiate a base agreement and remain in power, and it is likely -- considering the first UMT boycotts of ships coming with supplies for the bases -- that if some agreement is not quickly made there will be unpleasant incidents involving Americans in this country.

The succession of broken reeds upon which Western, and more recently American, policy has leaned in the Middle East has about come to an end: Ibn Saud, Nuri as-Said, Chamoun, Hussein, were all an unrealistic attempt to make out of Arab nationalism something which would serve the West's interests. Now with the recognition of Abdel Nasser as, whether we like it or not, the leader who stands for what the Arabs themselves want, perhaps after the wasted years a better day will dawn.

There still seems to be a desire, however, to play the game in North Africa -- to cordon off the area; to "protect" it from the tainted Arab nationalism in the Middle East; to talk (as, for example, the New York Times editorials still do) in terms of sheer fantasy of a Franco-North African confederation, the likelihood of which is about as great as the revival of the Holy Roman Empire; to divide the forces here, as was once done in the Middle

East so unsuccessfully, into "good" and "bad" nationalists, and to play one against the other.

There are certainly profound divisions in North Africa, but any attempt to exploit them from the outside will only cause the breach to heal and make all parties present a united front. If American policy in North Africa continues to be a replica of the cold-war, stand-up-and-be-counted variety that has been followed in the Middle East up to now, there is no reason to expect that it will not end here in the same dismal failure as there.

*Charles F. Gallagher*