

DAG-5/2.3

Politics, Pre-independence + Independence -
French Union (excerpts from The Reshaping of French Democracy
by G. Wright)

Jan 1948 - Dec 1948

Unclassified

PLEASE RETAIN
ORIGINAL ORDER

UN ARCHIVES

SERIES S-0504
BOX 44
FILE 22
ACC. S-1562-0000-0083

French Union

67

United Nations Archives			
NO- 26	A/ 557	RR-	
Box 10	Drawer	File 19	
Subject	FRENCH UNION		
Period	1945		
Official	J. RAPAPORT		
	Div. Trusteeship		

Excerpts from THE RESHAPING OF FRENCH DEMOCRACY
by Gordon Wright.

These excerpts concern the French Union.

Reynal and Hitchcock, New York 1948.

Chapter 4 -
VII. Choosing the architects (on the
elections of October 1945)
pp.97-98

One set of almost unnoticed election returns which dribbled in during October and November were the results from the empire. Few Frenchmen realized the future implications of de Gaulle's revolutionary decision to give every colony and protectorate a voice in constitution-making. Once granted, that privilege could in practice never be taken away, and it might even be extended. The sixty-four overseas deputies might some day become, one, two, or three hundred; but even if they should remain sixty-four, their votes might at times hold the balance of political power in Paris.

de Gaulle's electoral law gave the suffrage not only to all French citizens in the empire, but also to limited categories of noncitizen natives. Because the latter usually outnumbered the citizen colonists, even when restricted to a few categories, the law divided the voters into two separate colleges throughout "Black Africa," Madagascar, and Algeria. In the older colonies where citizenship was almost universal, all voters were lumped into single colleges; while in the protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia, French citizens alone could vote.

Hastily announced, hastily organized, these first elections could reveal no clear pattern in most of the overseas areas. A lopsided proportion of nonparty "resistance" deputies were chosen: men who had early joined de Gaulle, and who had built up reputations in various colonies as Gaullist representatives. In a few areas -- notably Senegal and the West Indies -- the Socialist party had gotten a firm foothold before the war, and maintained its advantage. The Communists had made only slight progress overseas, and the M.R.P. of course had no roots there at all.

Nor was there much evidence of vigorous native nationalist movements demanding either autonomy or independence. The Viet Minh in Indo-China was potentially the strongest of such movements; but Indo-China was barely emerging from Japanese occupation, and conditions were still too unsettled to schedule elections there. In Algeria, which was assigned twenty-six of the sixty-four overseas deputies, leaders of the two strongest Arab nationalist organizations had been in jail for periods ranging from six months to seven

years, and were therefore hors de combat. In both Morocco and Tunisia there were dangerously strong Arab movements — the Istiqlal party of Ahmed Balafrej and the Neo-Destour group of exiled Habib Bourguiba — but the natives in both areas were technically subjects of their native rulers and could not take part in a French election. Only in Madagascar did a feeble flicker of native nationalism show itself on October 21. The two native deputies elected to represent that island, Drs. Ravoahangy and Raseta, aimed at autonomy and perhaps full independence; Ravoahangy had once been condemned to life imprisonment for anti-French agitation. Two Hova voices, however, scarcely seemed potent enough to shake the empire.

Chapter 5 -

I. The face of reborn democracy
p.102

An exotic note was added by the sprinkling of Arab, Negro, Malagasy, and Hindu deputies from every corner of the empire. The red fez of Amar Ouzegane, Algerian Communist, and the Senegalese features of M. Lamine-Gueye, Socialist mayor of Dakar, stood out among the Assembly's secretaries who sat flanking the president's chair. As the native deputies straggled in from their distant electoral districts, they scattered out in various parts of the chamber and showed no real tendency to form a cohesive bloc. Eventually all sixty-four colonial representatives organized an Intergroup of Overseas Deputies, but internal division between the white colonists and the native deputies made it totally ineffective. Most of the natives were totally without experience in legislative matters and were somewhat awed by their sudden elevation to such prominence. The only well-knit native group consisted of seven Algerian Arabs headed by Dr. Mohamed Bendjelloul, a professional politician of pro-French tendencies. The Arabs formed a little oasis in the centre of the semicircle and soon distinguished themselves by long and dull harangues on the Algerian question. One of their number, M. Benchennouf, a picturesque figure complete with flowing beard and burnoose, was an object of special attention and sympathy except when he occupied the speakers' tribune.

One of the most formidable tasks facing the Assembly was the constitutional reorganization of the empire. To the average deputy, the problem resembled a trek into the African bush without map or compass. Most educated Frenchmen possessed some academic knowledge of the size and complexity of the empire, and were deeply imbued with the conviction that the colonial peoples at heart loved and respected France. They were dimly aware that signs of native discontent, and they believed that unless France moved quickly to check that discontent, rival nations might profit by French weakness to chip away parts of the empire. But not more than a few dozen members of the Assembly were equipped to study imperial reorganization with any real understanding of the problems involved, or of the potentialities and desires of the overseas populations.

Prior to 1940, the issue of imperial reform had not arisen in any pressing sense. There had long existed a sporadic controversy between two broad schools of thought — assimilation versus association — but neither concept had involved revolutionizing the relationships between France and its possessions. The assimilationists had aimed to convert the colonial peoples into Frenchmen, by replacing the native cultures with French culture and absorbing the colonies into the highly centralized French political structure. The associationists, who gradually got the upper hand, had preferred to transform only a native elite into full French citizens, and to entrust this elite with a share in the administration. Both groups intended to keep the empire's centre of gravity in Paris. Only the Communists, obedient to the teachings of Lenin, showed much sympathy for native separatist movements overseas.

Bewildering variety rather than logical symmetry characterized the empire as it stood in 1945. There were first of all the "old colonies" of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana, and Réunion, all products of a century of assimilation. Their populations possessed French citizenship, and in 1946 the Constituent Assembly was to complete the assimilation process by promoting all four colonies to the status of French departments. French India and Senegal possessed a

a special status approaching that of the "old colonies," and the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon were unique because their tiny population was made up entirely of French colonists.

On the surface, Algeria too seemed to be assimilated, since it was organized into three French departments. In fact, however, its status was colonial. French settlers were outnumbered eight to one by Arab and Berber noncitizens. In 1944 de Gaulle had taken a short step toward assimilation by granting citizenship to about 60,000 Arabs without requiring them to abandon Moslem law as a prerequisite. To assimilate the remaining eight million, nowever, would be a long process; and there was reason to believe that the Arabs themselves did not desire it.

Algeria's neighbours Morocco and Tunisia, along with Annam-Tongking and Cambodia in Indo-China, were still protectorates with native puppet rulers controlled by the French. In consequence, their populations were not French citizens but subjects of the native rulers, who still possessed theoretical sovereignty. The rest of the empire was administered directly by French colonial officials, with local self-government virtually nonexistent. This was the status of the federations of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa; of Madagascar and the Comores Islands; of Somaliland, Cochin-China, New Caledonia, and Oceania. Most of these colonies contained only a handful of French settlers; in the Ivory Coast, for example, there were four thousand Frenchmen scattered among four million natives. Two mandated areas, Togoland and Cameroons, had been administered like colonies under League of Nations supervision. Their future, like that of the protectorates, could not be unilaterally settled by the Constituent Assembly.

The idea of converting the empire into some form of commonwealth, or federation did not originate with the French underground. Instead, it was imported from Algiers by de Gaulle and the Free French returning from exile. The proposal had a number of roots. Gratitude was one: de Gaulle owed some recompense to the colonies for their aid to his Free French movement after 1940. For two years, more than half the troops in the Free French forces had been African natives. National prestige was another: France's only hope of

winning back the status of a first-rank power seemed to depend on knitting the empire together. The phrase "a hundred million Frenchmen" rang with satisfaction in the ears of French patriots. Necessity was a third root: the loss of Syria and the Lebanon, the revolt in Indo-China, the growing sentiment of nationalism in Asia and Africa vaguely worried the French and moved them to seek a barrier against the breakup of their empire. Idealism was a fourth: the Left wing in France had traditionally favoured improving both the political and the social status of the natives. In consequence, it was generally agreed in the summer of 1945 that the overseas peoples ought to help draft the constitution, and no hostile voice was raised when de Gaulle authorized every territory to elect deputies to the Constituent Assembly.

Although it was de Gaulle who had brought the idea of imperial reform from Algiers, he and his advisers had developed no positive plans. Their negative aims were a bit clearer, at least to those persons who recalled the Brazzaville Conference of French colonial officials in January 1944. At the head of the recommendations adopted at Brazzaville was this warning: "The effect of the civilizing work accomplished by France in the colonies dispels any idea of autonomy, any possibility of evolution outside the French imperial bloc. Even the distant establishment of 'self-government' (sic) in our colonies is to be set aside." Progress toward dominion status was therefore ruled out by the Gaullists, at least for the African continent.

The Brazzaville Conference did lay plans for improving the social and economic lot of the native peoples, and after de Gaulle's return to France his government took some positive steps in that direction. A native labour code was promulgated, and an eventual end to forced labour was foreseen. In the field of colonial self-rule, however, de Gaulle was extremely cautious. His cabinet confined itself to setting up several colonial assemblies with restricted membership and limited powers. Not even de Gaulle's Colonial Ministers Paul Giacobbi and Jacques Soustelle had yet caught the vision of what Soustelle later called a "Copernican revolution" in the imperial realm. Giacobbi's major contribution was the phrase "French Union," which he first used in March 1945 to describe the future federation.

The Constitutional Committee was plainly at a loss in attacking the problem. Colonial deputies were so few in the Committee's ranks that it seemed logical and proper to call on the Committee on Overseas France for aid. The latter body, made up in majority of overseas representatives, was presumably better equipped to propose a specific plan.

It was a curious blend of federalism and centralization which finally emerged from the Overseas Committee's deliberations. Marius Moutet, its Socialist chairman (and shortly to become the perennial Minister for Overseas France), introduced the plan as "a leap into the unknown," but nevertheless defended it as a necessary gamble if France were to hold its colonies. The project adopted Giaccobi's term "French Union" as the name of the new structure, and declared that membership in his Union would be based on "free consent". The status of "subject" would be wiped out; every French national, from Parisian to neolithic Congo tribesman, would become a citizen and would enjoy full equality of rights. Each overseas area would be authorized to elect a territorial assembly, with the power to shape local policies and to control the local administration. Up to this point, the plan was federal in spirit. The federal capstone, however, was left off. The draft contained no provision for either a federal assembly or a federal executive at the top. Instead, the overseas areas would continue to send deputies to the French legislature in Paris, just as they had done to the Constituent Assembly. All natives would be given the suffrage, and both natives and white colonists in each area would be lumped together for voting purposes.

This plan, although less completely federal than some native deputies desired, had far-reaching implications. If membership in the Union were really to be based on free consent, a territory might conceivably refuse to enter the Union or might later secede. If the territorial assemblies were to receive broad local autonomy, they might strike out on the road leading to separatism. If the overseas populations were to receive fully equal rights, they might dominate parliament, for sixty million people lived overseas as compared to only forty million in continental France. Finally, if natives and colonists in each territory were to be lumped into joint electoral colleges, the small colonist element would be snowed under and would lose all representation both in the Paris legislature and in the territorial assemblies.

The Overseas Committee's plan offered something specific as a point of departure, but it certainly did not dissipate the fog enshrouding the French Union question. The long debate which followed was the most confused and contradictory of all the Constitutional Committee's labours. Unfortunately, the empire was far too complex an organization to be made over on the basis of pure logic; and when forty-two Frenchmen pit their Cartesian training and prejudices against an empirical problem, the outcome is likely to be cloudy.

As a general rule, the discussion set the Socialists and Communists against the M.R.P. and the minor parties. The Left was inclined to accept the Overseas Committee's plan for the time being, and to look beyond it toward complete federalism as the proper goal. Both Socialists and Communists dimly foresaw a future federation of peoples, each with its own culture, its own responsible government, and its own citizenship, crowned by some sort of federal parliament. They knew, however, that many of the colonies were still too primitive to function as states in a federation. Most of them agreed with the bureaucrat who, when told that Algeria wanted immediate statehood, snorted, "Nonsense! where would they get the stenographers?" Therefore they advocated that federalism be achieved on the installment plan.

Their aim was to begin at the bottom with territorial assemblies, and to expand the powers of these bodies as the natives' capacity for self-government increased. For the time being, matters of common interest to the whole Union would continue to be decided by the Paris legislature, in which the overseas territories would be represented on a minority basis. Once the territories reached maturity, this representation would be suppressed. The Paris legislature would become merely the national assembly for continental France, on a level with the assemblies of Madagascar, West Africa, and the rest. The common interests of the Union would then be taken over by a truly federal assembly. In preparation for that historic day, André Philip proposed to set up at once an advisory Council of the French Union. Out of this nucleus would eventually develop the dominant federal assembly.

The Left indignantly denied Rightist charges that its programme might lead to the breakup of the empire. "Federalism in no way implies separatism or secession," cried the Socialist Gilbert Zaksas; and Pierre Hervé added: "Does federalism lead to dismemberment? That is false. It would be more accurate to expect such a result from a policy of all-out assimilation". Yet the Leftists at times showed their embarrassment and their uncertainty. Hervé himself once let slip the remark that "we wish to lead the peoples under our protection toward autonomy or even independence"; and both Etienne Fajon and Guy Mollet admitted that "federalism might lead to a recognition of the right of secession". Nevertheless, the Left argued, the only proper solution was to let the overseas peoples evolve freely in whatever direction they might choose. To strait-jacket them would be the surest way to bring on trouble.

In contrast to this approach, the M.R.P. and Right were more cautious, more suspicious of federalism, more determined to maintain the tensile strength of imperial ties. Their hazy goal was not to develop a series of separate nations loosely joined in a federal union, but to make the overseas possessions into French provinces or, as Pierre Cot put it, "annexes to the mother country". The M.R.P.-led bloc was ready to abandon assimilation in the cultural sense, but intended to preserve it politically.

The principal author of this policy was the M.R.P. deputy Paul Viard, Dean of the Algiers Law School. Viard urged that separatist movements be headed off by converting all native subjects into French citizens at once. He realized, however, that the sixty million newly created French citizens might soon demand sixty per cent of the legislative seats in Paris, and that such a demand would be hard to refute. He therefore suggested that French citizenship be subdivided into two categories: "citizens of French statute" (i.e. those subject to French law) and "citizens of local statute" (those who would choose to retain their own law and customs, such as the Moslems and the peoples of Black Africa). By implication, citizens in the latter category would have no claim to full political equality. Besides, they would vote in a separate electoral college, which would prevent them from submerging the white

colonist element. Viard suggested that if the natives' self-esteem were offended by this plan, it could be soothed by giving them heavy representation in a purely advisory Council of the French Union. Even in such a Council, however, Viard argued that continental France ought to be given two-thirds of the seats. The overseas delegates, he insisted, must be "bathed in a French atmosphere".

The Left reacted vigorously against Viard's proposals to make the natives "second-class citizens" and to require them to vote in a separate electoral college. "The most profound aspiration of the native populations," asserted Marius Moutet, "is to feel that they are treated on a basis of equality". Maintenance of the double electoral college, he warned, would be regarded as a symbol of racism and might stimulate separatism. Mohand Achour, an Algerian Arab sitting as a substitute Socialist committeeman, protested at the idea of two types of citizenship. "Is there such a difference between Moslems and occidentals?" he asked ironically. "The former keep all their wives under one roof, while the latter have a woman in every quarter. [Laughter; protests from the M.R.P.]" The Left also questioned the wisdom of forcing either first- or second-class French citizenship on native peoples who might prefer to become citizens of Madagascar, Viet Nam, or some other federated state within the French Union.

The product of this long and fuzzy debate was a series of a half-dozen articles scattered through the constitutional draft, so loose and vague that no party voted against them. At bottom, these articles embodied most of the Left-wing demands; they left the future almost completely open. Even the M.R.P. and Right agreed to base membership in the Union on "free consent". They knew that in practice the phrase would be little more than a pious wish, or even a "pharisaism," as Paul Coste-Floret bluntly put it. The draft forbade discrimination based on colour or beliefs, and specifically outlawed forced labour. It endowed the native populations with "all the rights attached to the status of citizen," but it purposely avoided a choice among "French citizenship," "citizenship of the French Union", or citizenship of a local

territory such as Madagascar. No guarantee of the double electoral college was included, and the Left wing majority promptly abolished it in the new electoral law. By general consent, all the overseas territories were granted elective assemblies, plus the right to send deputies to the legislature in Paris. The Left proceeded to vest the new territorial assemblies with relatively broad powers to control the administration. Besides, the colonial administration was revolutionized; the post of governor was abolished, and it was decided that in his place there would be a political figure subject to direct control by the Paris assembly.

The Committee's longest controversy occurred over the nature of the new Council of the French Union. Once the principle of its creation was accepted by all parties, the M.R.P. and Right swung their weight behind the idea of making it an upper house of parliament. They urged that it participate in electing the president of the Republic and that it have the right to examine all bills adopted by the National Assembly. Both Communists and Socialists absolutely refused to let bicameralism be brought in thus through the back door; they set up the Council as a narrowly limited body with purely advisory powers on questions affecting the whole Union. Some Leftists viewed the Council as a body which might eventually develop into the real unicameral assembly of the French Union; but all Leftists were determined not to let it grow into a new Senate.

The French Union structure which finally emerged from Committee was a pretty nebulous affair, marred by gaps even more than by inconsistencies. Some skeptical Frenchmen preferred to describe it as "an insufficiently licked bear." But at least it did not try to force the polyglot empire into a rigid, logical framework. With its hybrid character of federalism and centralization, it was capable of future development in almost any direction. In a time of uncertainty, that was perhaps a virtue.

Chapter 5 -

XI. Revolution in a spare moment
(on the reforms introduced by the
first Constituent Assembly)

p.169.

..... It pointed the way toward a new colonial policy by promoting the natives to full citizenship, by abolishing all forms of forced labour in the empire, and by establishing an "overseas development fund" to finance projects of economic and social betterment.

Chapter 5 -

XII. Stillbirth of a constitution
pp.179-180

From the empire came returns which deserved more attention than they got. Without exception, wherever white colonist voters were in the majority the constitution was rejected; wherever native voters dominated it was approved. The key to these results was the fact that citizens alone were allowed to vote. Throughout North Africa, Black Africa, and Madagascar, citizenship was restricted almost entirely to the white colonists. They balked at the prospect of new political and social guarantees for the natives, at the threat that the white minority would be swamped by a flood of new citizens, and at the idea of relaxing the bonds of empire. Only in territories where the natives had long since been promoted from subject to citizen (Senegal, French India, and the four "old colonies") was the constitution approved by huge and triumphant majorities. These results suggested that the French Union problem had merely been skirted by the first Constituent Assembly, and that the new Assembly would find itself faced with a far more complex dispute. Upon its successful solution might depend the fate of the empire.

Chapter 6 -
I. The will of the people
pp.188-190.

When party leaders shifted their field of vision to the overseas election results, they were suddenly struck by the possibility that the sixty-four "colonials," so obscure in the First Constituent Assembly, might actually hold the balance of power in the Second Constituent. The elections confirmed the rough cleavage between French colonist and native voters which had already appeared in the referendum. Most of the colonists were by now obsessed by the Black Perio, and chose conservative deputies (usually U.D.S.R. or M.R.P.) committed to defend the rights of the white minority. Native political leaders, on the other hand, had definitely decided to throw in their lot with the Socialists or the Communists, who would fight to preserve the rights won in the defunct Assembly. As a result, the Left parties picked up additional strength in Black Africa, Madagascar, and the Antilles — not enough to offset the M.R.P. victory in continental France, yet sufficient to close the gap considerably.

Most striking of all were the Algerian results. In place of Dr. Bendjelloul's colourless group of "tame" Arabs who had sat in the First Assembly, a vigorous Arab party called "Friends of the Manifesto" swept eleven of the thirteen native seats. All of the Manifesto deputies, including their leader Ferhat Abbas, had just emerged from prison, where they had been held since the bloody Algerian riots of May 1945. Their programme was little known in France, but it was presumed to be extreme. Abbas himself, a handsome, hawk-nosed pharmacist of Sétif, had once been a follower of Dr. Bendjelloul and an exponent of the complete assimilation of Algeria by France. He himself was a product of assimilation: educated in French Algerian schools, he was the son of an Arab official who had reached the dignity of Commander of the Legion of Honour. After serving as a volunteer on the Western front in 1939-1940, Abbas has brusquely reversed his position, and in his Manifesto issued in 1943, had demanded "a free Algeria joined to a free France". Shortly after his election, he was credited with remarking that "the Algerians are tired of being the bastard sons of France". His declared goal was autonomy rather than complete

independence, but there were some rumors of an alliance between Abbas and Messali Hajd, exiled leader of an extremist faction which demanded that all ties with France be broken. He was also known to be in contact with the Moslem reformist groups called the Oulemas, whose programme was pan-Islamic. Time was to show, however, that Abbas was far more loyal to France than his chief rival Messali.

The effect which a noisy group of Algerian autonomists might have on the constitutional discussions was obvious. But in addition, party leaders quickly calculated that if Abbas should throw his strength to the Communists and Socialists, he would raise the Left wing's total to 293 votes, or exactly half the membership of the Assembly. The potential importance of the eleven-man Manifesto group was therefore far out of proportion to its size. In subsequent months, Abbas was to take full advantage of his key position, and to assume a role of peculiar importance in the new Assembly.

Chapter 6 -

III. Voice from the wilderness
(on de Gaulle's programme of
June 1946) pp.194, 197-198.

..... Third, the French Union must be completely rebuilt on federal principles, with the initial federal organs to be set up at once by the constitution.

.....

What Capitant tried to do was to integrate the idea of a strong executive with de Gaulle's new thesis of imperial federalism. The blueprint which he drew up was strange and wonderful to behold. It maintained the parliamentary system for continental France, but combined it with a presidential system for the French Union as a whole. The president of the Republic (and of the French Union) would appoint premiers in France and in certain other advanced parts of the Union. These premiers would be responsible to their respective legislatures, in true parliamentary fashion. In more backward areas, however, the president would name a kind of viceroy and a ministry responsible only to the president himself. In addition, a federal cabinet for the entire French Union would be set up in Paris to administer foreign affairs, national defence, and finance, and this cabinet would be directly responsible to the president.

Capitant was frank to admit that his scheme would make the French president one of the most powerful men on earth. Such authority, he contended, is necessary in the modern world; every great power today possesses a strong executive. He also accepted as obvious the fact that de Gaulle was the only living Frenchman capable of filling such a post. He believed that de Gaulle would be able to establish the system so solidly that it could continue to function even if weaker men were to succeed him as president.

A far more significant remnant of Socialist-Communist co-operation had to do with the French Union. During the life of the Second Constituent Assembly, that issue finally emerged from the fog into the spotlight, and threatened to dominate the entire constitutional debate.

Before the Assembly convened, it had seemed likely that the French Union clauses of the Pierre Cot draft would survive intact. That aspect of the constitution had drawn virtually no criticism in continental France during the referendum campaign. Immediately after the referendum, the Gouin cabinet had met and had announced to the overseas natives that none of their newly promised rights would be withdrawn. M. Laurentie, Director of Political Affairs in the Ministry for Overseas France, had added publicly; "It can be affirmed without hesitation that the French Union system as defined by the First Constituent Assembly remains above dispute".

It did not take long for this rosy haze of unanimity to evaporate. Colonial deputies representing colleges of white voters had found the latter on the warpath against the First Constituent's French Union plan. These voters demanded a complete revision, and sent their deputies back to Paris filled with the fear of God and the elector. A second factor which shook many French politicians was the election of Ferhat Abbas and his fire-eating lieutenants in Algeria. The sentiment arose that if this was the fruit of the new policy of generosity, perhaps it would be wise to take another look at the tree which had borne it. They were disturbed too at reports of the rising nationalist movement in North Africa, and of an anti-French slogan allegedly in use among the Arabs: "Traveling bags or coffins!" Finally, de Gaulle's Bayeux speech, which placed the question of empire at the very heart of the constitutional problem, struck the M.R.P. in particular with a severe jolt.

Shortly after the new Assembly met, the M.R.P. suddenly announced its conversion to "progressive federalism" as the basis for the French Union. The term implied a sharp reversal of the M.R.P.'s earlier position. In the First Constituent it had followed the lead of Paul Viard, consistently rejecting the

Left-wing's federal doctrine in favour of a centralized French Union. The M.R.P.'s decision not to reappoint Viard to the Constitutional Committee was an early sign that its ideas were in a state of flux.

Curiously enough, the right-about-face of the M.R.P. did not mean that it had suddenly joined hands with the Left. On the contrary, it intensified the differences between them. Lengthy debate was necessary before party positions became relatively clear, and varying concepts of the term "federal" could be defined. When clarity finally emerged, the differences boiled down to these: (a) Should the framework of a federal commonwealth be set up at once from the top, by an Assembly dominated by continental Frenchmen; or should it be built from the bottom over a period of years? (b) Should the constitution guarantee a share in government to the white colonist minority; or should the colonists be left to shift for themselves, a tiny minority in a huge native electorate?

To the Socialists and Communists, it seemed logical to build a federal French Union from below, and to delay its completion until the colonial populations could send their fair share of constitutional architects. The existing Assembly, they felt, was unrepresentative of the overseas natives, for only ten per cent of the deputies were colonials. They wished to begin with local assemblies in overseas area, elected by a suffrage that would make no distinction between natives and French colonists. Each assembly, they argued, should work out its local statute of government in collaboration with the Paris parliament. The Left felt that its programme could be achieved by re-enacting, with slight changes, the loose and nebulous French Union clauses of the Pierre Cot draft. Its version of federalism was strongly backed by the overseas native deputies, whose votes were so important to the Socialists and Communists. Political advantage thus fused with idealistic motives in crystallizing the Left's viewpoint.

The M.R.P.'s variety of progressive federalism, on the other hand, sprang from ideas similar to those of de Gaulle. Both the M.R.P. and de Gaulle feared that unless positive imperial bonds were created at once, the empire might fall apart before the Union could be consummated. The M.R.P. felt, therefore, that the Assembly must immediately set up federal organs in Paris. The president of the republic must be given the additional title of president of the French

Union; and an Assembly of the French union must be created, distinct from the two-house French parliament, to deal with matters affecting the whole Union. When pinned down, the M.R.P. spokesman Paul Coste-Floret admitted that this assembly would be given little power at first; but he argued that its authority would grow gradually. The M.R.P. also insisted that the structure of government in the various overseas territories should be determined in Paris, in order to keep the degree of local autonomy within bounds. Finally, it demanded that some seats in all elected bodies be reserved for the white colonist minority. This M.R.P. programme won strong support from the Rassemblement des Gauches and the Right, some of whose deputies proposed to go even further. They even suggested a "second-class" citizenship for the natives, and they proposed that all the native deputies be shifted out of the Paris parliament into the powerless Assembly of the French Union.

As the two sides squared off for a showdown fight, the coloured and Arab deputies decided that in union there might be strength. They therefore seceded from the old Intergroup of Overseas Deputies (which included colonists as well as natives) and set up a narrower but tighter-knit Intergroup of Native Deputies. The dominant figure in this new body was Ferhat Abbas, who, with his ten Algerian followers, served as a pole of attraction which had been lacking in the earlier Assembly. Visible proof of this influence was furnished on the floor of the Assembly, where coloured deputies from other colonies gradually began to migrate to the benches adjoining the Manifesto party. First came the two Madagascar autonomists, then two coloured members of the U.D.S.R., and finally a scattering of representatives from Black Africa. Their arrival shifted the Right-Left balance just enough to give the Left a clear majority once more.

The Native Intergroup's ideas on the French Union were incorporated in a draft plan put together by Abbas himself. On July 31 that plan, with some modifications, was accepted by the Constitutional Committee by a twenty-one to twenty margin. The victory was a major one, and the possibilities of the plan were formidable. It was built around the Socialist-Communist interpretation of progressive federalism, with the Union to be built from the bottom over a

period of years. Each overseas territory would be free to enter the French Union as either (a) a free state linked to France by international treaty, (b) an autonomous unit, or (c) an integral part of France proper. By a loophole consciously placed in the draft, any territory might also choose to remain outside the French Union. Full French citizenship would be granted to all residents of the Union except those already possessing another citizenship (e.g., the Moroccans). Every remnant of inequality between native resident and white settler would be wiped out. On the French Union issue, the Left wing's triumph was total; but it was also temporary. During the weeks that followed, that issue was destined to bring the threat of a cabinet crisis, and to produce the intervention of President Bidault himself.

The French Union problem was the final topic on the Committee's agenda. Six weeks had sufficed to unravel the rejected constitution and to reweave its pattern in slightly different form. On August 2 came the climatic vote on the revised draft as a whole; and just as in April, one major party refused to go along with its rivals. This time it was the Communists who declared that "the project exceeds the limits of reasonable compromise," and who threatened to carry their opposition into the referendum unless changes were made on the floor of the Assembly. The prospect of three-party unity seemed further off than ever, especially since the M.R.P. had no special desire to win over the Communists. Paul Coste-Floret, the M.R.P.'s Reporter-General, had little of Pierre Cot's zeal to evangelize the heathen; he would be satisfied to hold together the Centre bloc. Yet, strangely enough, he was to succeed in achieving Cot's goal of tripartite unity, and the unwitting author of his success was to be Charles de Gaulle.

A special source of hard feeling was the fact that the Algerian and Malagasy autonomists controlled the fate of several important amendments. Whenever the Assembly split into Right and Left blocs, the handful of deputies around Ferhat Abbas (eleven Algerians plus four natives from Madagascar, the Comores Islands, and French India) were enough to give the Left victory. For example, they enabled the Left to beat off a final M.R.P.-Right-wing attempt to salvage freedom of instruction; the margin was 274 to 272. M.R.P. and Rightist leaders were exasperated at this "alien interference" in the affairs of continental France. They asked bitterly if the voters would be presented this time with "a Communist-Socialist-Islamic constitution" as a substitute for the Pierre Cot draft. In vain Abbas pointed out that he and his followers were not in Paris by choice, and that they would much prefer to sit in a new Algerian parliament. The ill feeling persisted nevertheless.

Those final constitutional skirmishes centered around one major issue -- the character of the French Union -- and two relatively minor ones -- the method of electing the upper house, and the question of secret or open ballot in choosing the president. In the upper house dispute, it was the M.R.P. which retreated far enough to prevent a Right-Left split; in the other two cases, the Socialists and Communists gave ground.

The upper house issue was the first to be settled. Late in August the Socialists had shifted over to the Communist position, favouring popular election by proportional representation rather than indirect election by the local councils. The inevitable result would be to weaken the upper house still further by making it a political mirror of the lower house. For two weeks the M.R.P. stubbornly refused all the offers of compromise suggested by the tireless Vincent Auriol. Its unyielding attitude reflected the intraparty stress caused by de Gaulle's intervention; many M.R.P. backbenchers had decided that a rupture with the Socialists would be better than a break with de Gaulle. All the prestige and influence of Georges Bidault were needed to tip the scales. Bidault, appearing before an M.R.P. caucus on September 11, pleaded with his colleagues to shake off their hypnotic fear of de Gaulle and to accept the Socialists' compromise offer. His appeal won the caucus over, but only by a bare six-vote majority. The compromise was accepted, and a Right-Left split narrowly averted. The solution provided that the first Council of the Republic would be chosen by indirect popular election (as the Left wished), but that the permanent system for election the Council would be postponed for decision by the future assembly.

The French Union showdown was longer and more complex. Bidault, who had gotten the original chapter withdrawn for revision, presented the Constitutional Committee with a substitute plan built around the M.R.P.'s concept of "progressive federalism". It plugged up the loophole of secession, assured the white colonist minority of special representation, converted the native people into "citizens of the French Union" rather than full-fledged French citizens, guaranteed that the Paris parliament would measure out the autonomy to be granted to each overseas area, and provided for the immediate creation of three federal organs in Paris -- the president, an Assembly of the French Union, and a High Council of States.

The Left-wing-native bloc in the Committee set out at once to water down Bidault's proposal. It was so successful that Bidault once more had to use personal pressure; he appeared before the Committee on September 19 and made it plain that he would resign as president if his plan were not restored in its original purity. The Left wing, faced a second time with the threat of a cabinet crisis, again capitulated. On September 20, the Committee accepted the Bidault-sponsored plan with only minor changes.

That decision immediately produced a counter crisis. Ferhat Abbas and several other native deputies sitting in the Committee as alternates or observers walked out, and the entire Intergroup of Native Deputies decided to resign from the Assembly en masse unless Bidault would compromise. That afternoon, when the Assembly began its general debate on the French Union chapter; every native quietly arose and left the hall. Even wizened little Prince Douala Manga Bell of Cameroon, the sole coloured deputy on the M.R.P. benches, filed meekly out when tapped on the shoulder by a fellow African. It looked as though the much-advertised new imperial federation would be set up by fiat of the mother country alone.

At this critical moment Auriol and Marius Moutet, Socialist Minister for Overseas France, stepped in as conciliators. They brought Bidault and the native deputies together for a lengthy talk, out of which came an agreement in extremis. The natives agreed to accept the Bidault plan with its rigid organization and its guarantees of French sovereignty, while Bidault agreed to alter two provisions which smacked of racial inequality. As a result, the double electoral college was transferred from the constitution to the less sacrosanct electoral law, and the native peoples were assured of "first-class" citizenship. All Frenchmen and natives in the Union (except citizens of the associated states like Morocco) were given a dual status as "French citizen" and "citizen of the French Union". The latter phrase retained only one purpose: it applied to citizens of the associated states as well, and thus brought the Moroccans, Tunisians, and Viet-Nameese into the fold.

Abbas and the native deputies were back in their regular places the next day, but a residue of bitterness remained. When Bidault praised the Assembly for adopting his plan and described the French Union as "an institution whose like cannot be found anywhere else in the world," the natives pointedly refused to join the applause and exchanged sour looks. Further evidence of resentment came a few days later, when Abbas dropped his usual conciliatory tone and brought on the most violent parliamentary incident since prewar days. As Abbas mounted to the tribune for the last time, a Right-wing deputy shouted, "What's that salaud doing here anyhow?" Provoked by this greeting and by further interruptions, Abbas broke up the meeting when he charged that France had not been able to defend its empire in 1940, and that French colonial policy had been one of the worst blots on the record of the Third Republic; half of the deputies immediately walked out, and one group of firebrands headed by Maurice Schumann laid siege to the tribune in an effort to drag Abbas down by force. The Communists naturally rallied to his defence, and a free-for-all was narrowly averted. The incident, occurring in the final hours of the constitutional debate, was in sharp contrast to the First Constituent Assembly's love feast over French Union matters. Perhaps it was also a portent of the storms which were to shake the Union during the months to come.

Chapter 6 -
VII. St. Charles and the
Three-Headed Dragon (on the
second referendum, 13 October 1946)
p.230

The echoes of de Gaulle's pre-referendum attack on the constitution reached overseas France, and probably influenced the voting there on October 13; the result was a repetition of April, even though the French Union clauses had been greatly modified since then. White colonist voters again refused to approve the constitution wherever they dominated the polls; but where native voters were in control, the majority was heavily "yes". The native attitude was realistic. They knew that they had lost ground since April, but the project nevertheless still contained some important new rights. Besides, their Socialist and Communist leaders recommended adoption. The white colonists, however, were not appeased by the improvements in the French Union chapter which Bidault had engineered. To them, the empire was still in danger, even if the worst mistakes of men like Pierre Cot had been corrected. In fact, they generally voted down the "improved" draft by even greater majorities than in April. The mental barrier overseas between colonizer and colonized was evidently getting more rigid rather than less so. In direct proportion, the need for able statesmanship in Paris increased. Clearly, creating the French Union would not be an easy process.

Chapter 7 -

II. The spirit and structure of
the Constitution
pp.242-243.

The French Union's mechanism is a curious blend of logic and realism. To begin with, all parts of the Union are classified into one of two broad categories: (a) the French Republic, including continental France, the assimilated overseas departments like Martinique and Guiana, and the overseas and the overseas territories like Equatorial Africa or New Caledonia; (b) the associated states - Morocco, Tunisia, and the various segments of the projected Indo-Chinese Federation. The way is left open for the overseas territories to evolve either toward full assimilation as French departments or toward autonomy as associated states. Their status cannot be changed, however, without the consent of parliament in Paris.

The constitution provides for three new quasi-federal organs in Paris. The first will be the president of the French Union — ex officio title of the president of the republic. The second is the High Council of States, a consultative body composed of delegates of the associated states as well as of the French Republic. The High Council will resemble a collection of ambassadors from states linked together by international treaties. It represents a rather feeble attempt to co-ordinate the policies of the associated states with those of France. The third new organ, the Assembly of the French Union, will not include representatives of the associated states unless the latter voluntarily choose to participate. Half of its membership will come from the overseas areas, half from continental France. Its initial powers will be purely advisory; it will have the right to vote resolutions and to express its opinion on proposed laws referred to it by the National Assembly or the cabinet. The constitution-makers presumed that all bills affecting the Union as a whole would be referred to the Assembly of the French Union.

For the immediate future, this commonwealth structure will amount to little more than a façade. Real power to legislate for the Union as a whole remains in the hands of the French parliament, which contains a small proportion

of overseas representatives (at present, roughly ten per cent of the National Assembly and twenty per cent in the Council of the Republic). A limited degree of local self-government has been granted by setting up representative assemblies in all the overseas territories. One African deputy has rather unjustly stigmatized these assemblies as "caricatures of democracy". They possess relatively narrow powers to advise and control the governor, and most of them assure some representation to the white minority. Algeria has recently been granted an assembly with somewhat greater autonomy, but the federalist hopes of Ferhat Abbas are still unrealized. As of 1947, "progressive federalism" has not progressed very far. If that doctrine turns out to be more than a mere phrase, the day may come when the Assembly of the French Union will develop into the central organ of the whole system, with a federal cabinet responsible to it. At best, however, that day lies in the misty future.

#8
MAX RE
"FRENCH UNION"

United Nations Archives			
NO- 26	A/ 557	RD-	
Box 10	Drawer	File 21	
Subject	FRANCH. UNION		
Period	1945		
Official			

Excerpts from THE RESHAPING OF FRENCH DEMOCRACY
by Gordon Wright.

These excerpts concern the French Union.

Reynal and Hitchcock, New York 1948.

Chapter 4 -
VII. Choosing the architects (on the
elections of October 1945)
pp.97-98

One set of almost unnoticed election returns which dribbled in during October and November were the results from the empire. Few Frenchmen realized the future implications of de Gaulle's revolutionary decision to give every colony and protectorate a voice in constitution-making. Once granted, that privilege could in practice never be taken away, and it might even be extended. The sixty-four overseas deputies might some day become, one, two, or three hundred; but even if they should remain sixty-four, their votes might at times hold the balance of political power in Paris.

de Gaulle's electoral law gave the suffrage not only to all French citizens in the empire, but also to limited categories of noncitizen natives. Because the latter usually outnumbered the citizen colonists, even when restricted to a few categories, the law divided the voters into two separate colleges throughout "Black Africa," Madagascar, and Algeria. In the older colonies where citizenship was almost universal, all voters were lumped into single colleges; while in the protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia, French citizens alone could vote.

Hastily announced, hastily organized, these first elections could reveal no clear pattern in most of the overseas areas. A lopsided proportion of nonparty "resistance" deputies were chosen: men who had early joined de Gaulle, and who had built up reputations in various colonies as Gaullist representatives. In a few areas -- notably Senegal and the West Indies -- the Socialist party had gotten a firm foothold before the war, and maintained its advantage. The Communists had made only slight progress overseas, and the M.R.P. of course had no roots there at all.

Nor was there much evidence of vigorous native nationalist movements demanding either autonomy or independence. The Viet Minh in Indo-China was potentially the strongest of such movements; but Indo-China was barely emerging from Japanese occupation, and conditions were still too unsettled to schedule elections there. In Algeria, which was assigned twenty-six of the sixty-four overseas deputies, leaders of the two strongest Arab nationalist organizations had been in jail for periods ranging from six months to seven

years, and were therefore hors de combat. In both Morocco and Tunisia there were dangerously strong Arab movements -- the Istiqlal party of Ahmed Balafrej and the Neo-Destour group of exiled Habib Bourguiba -- but the natives in both areas were technically subjects of their native rulers and could not take part in a French election. Only in Madagascar did a feeble flicker of native nationalism show itself on October 21. The two native deputies elected to represent that island, Drs. Ravoahangy and Raseta, aimed at autonomy and perhaps full independence; Ravoahangy had once been condemned to life imprisonment for anti-French agitation. Two Hova voices, however, scarcely seemed potent enough to shake the empire.

Chapter 5 -

I. The face of reborn democracy
p.102

An exotic note was added by the sprinkling of Arab, Negro, Malagasy, and Hindu deputies from every corner of the empire. The red fez of Amar Ouzegane, Algerian Communist, and the Senegalese features of M. Lamine-Gueye, Socialist mayor of Dakar, stood out among the Assembly's secretaries who sat flanking the president's chair. As the native deputies straggled in from their distant electoral districts, they scattered out in various parts of the chamber and showed no real tendency to form a cohesive bloc. Eventually all sixty-four colonial representatives organized an Intergroup of Overseas Deputies, but internal division between the white colonists and the native deputies made it totally ineffective. Most of the natives were totally without experience in legislative matters and were somewhat awed by their sudden elevation to such prominence. The only well-knit native group consisted of seven Algerian Arabs headed by Dr. Mohamed Bendjelloul, a professional politician of pro-French tendencies. The Arabs formed a little oasis in the centre of the semicircle and soon distinguished themselves by long and dull harangues on the Algerian question. One of their number, M. Benchennouf, a picturesque figure complete with flowing beard and burnoose, was an object of special attention and sympathy except when he occupied the speakers' tribune.

One of the most formidable tasks facing the Assembly was the constitutional reorganization of the empire. To the average deputy, the problem resembled a trek into the African bush without map or compass. Most educated Frenchmen possessed some academic knowledge of the size and complexity of the empire, and were deeply imbued with the conviction that the colonial peoples at heart loved and respected France. They were dimly aware that signs of native discontent, and they believed that unless France moved quickly to check that discontent, rival nations might profit by French weakness to chip away parts of the empire. But not more than a few dozen members of the Assembly were equipped to study imperial reorganization with any real understanding of the problems involved, or of the potentialities and desires of the overseas populations.

Prior to 1940, the issue of imperial reform had not arisen in any pressing sense. There had long existed a sporadic controversy between two broad schools of thought — assimilation versus association — but neither concept had involved revolutionizing the relationships between France and its possessions. The assimilationists had aimed to convert the colonial peoples into Frenchmen, by replacing the native cultures with French culture and absorbing the colonies into the highly centralized French political structure. The associationists, who gradually got the upper hand, had preferred to transform only a native elite into full French citizens, and to entrust this elite with a share in the administration. Both groups intended to keep the empire's centre of gravity in Paris. Only the Communists, obedient to the teachings of Lenin, showed much sympathy for native separatist movements overseas.

Bewildering variety rather than logical symmetry characterized the empire as it stood in 1945. There were first of all the "old colonies" of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana, and Réunion, all products of a century of assimilation. Their populations possessed French citizenship, and in 1946 the Constituent Assembly was to complete the assimilation process by promoting all four colonies to the status of French departments. French India and Senegal possessed a

a special status approaching that of the "old colonies," and the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon were unique because their tiny population was made up entirely of French colonists.

On the surface, Algeria too seemed to be assimilated, since it was organized into three French departments. In fact, however, its status was colonial. French settlers were outnumbered eight to one by Arab and Berber noncitizens. In 1944 de Gaulle had taken a short step toward assimilation by granting citizenship to about 60,000 Arabs without requiring them to abandon Moslem law as a prerequisite. To assimilate the remaining eight million, nowever, would be a long process; and there was reason to believe that the Arabs themselves did not desire it.

Algeria's neighbours Morocco and Tunisia, along with Annam-Tongking and Cambodia in Indo-China, were still protectorates with native puppet rulers controlled by the French. In consequence, their populations were not French citizens but subjects of the native rulers, who still possessed theoretical sovereignty. The rest of the empire was administered directly by French colonial officials, with local self-government virtually nonexistent. This was the status of the federations of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa; of Madagascar and the Comores Islands; of Somaliland, Cochinchina, New Caledonia, and Oceania. Most of these colonies contained only a handful of French settlers; in the Ivory Coast, for example, there were four thousand Frenchmen scattered among four million natives. Two mandated areas, Togoland and Cameroons, had been administered like colonies under League of Nations supervision. Their future, like that of the protectorates, could not be unilaterally settled by the Constituent Assembly.

The idea of converting the empire into some form of commonwealth, or federation did not originate with the French underground. Instead, it was imported from Algiers by de Gaulle and the Free French returning from exile. The proposal had a number of roots. Gratitude was one: de Gaulle owed some recompense to the colonies for their aid to his Free French movement after 1940. For two years, more than half the troops in the Free French forces had been African natives. National prestige was another: France's only hope of

winning back the status of a first-rank power seemed to depend on knitting the empire together. The phrase "a hundred million Frenchmen" rang with satisfaction in the ears of French patriots. Necessity was a third root: the loss of Syria and the Lebanon, the revolt in Indo-China, the growing sentiment of nationalism in Asia and Africa vaguely worried the French and moved them to seek a barrier against the breakup of their empire. Idealism was a fourth: the Left wing in France had traditionally favoured improving both the political and the social status of the natives. In consequence, it was generally agreed in the summer of 1945 that the overseas peoples ought to help draft the constitution, and no hostile voice was raised when de Gaulle authorized every territory to elect deputies to the Constituent Assembly.

Although it was de Gaulle who had brought the idea of imperial reform from Algiers, he and his advisers had developed no positive plans. Their negative aims were a bit clearer, at least to those persons who recalled the Brazzaville Conference of French colonial officials in January 1944. At the head of the recommendations adopted at Brazzaville was this warning: "The effect of the civilizing work accomplished by France in the colonies dispels any idea of autonomy, any possibility of evolution outside the French imperial bloc. Even the distant establishment of 'self-government' (sic) in our colonies is to be set aside." Progress toward dominion status was therefore ruled out by the Gaullists, at least for the African continent.

The Brazzaville Conference did lay plans for improving the social and economic lot of the native peoples, and after de Gaulle's return to France his government took some positive steps in that direction. A native labour code was promulgated, and an eventual end to forced labour was foreseen. In the field of colonial self-rule, however, de Gaulle was extremely cautious. His cabinet confined itself to setting up several colonial assemblies with restricted membership and limited powers. Not even de Gaulle's Colonial Ministers Paul Giacobbi and Jacques Soustelle had yet caught the vision of what Soustelle later called a "Copernican revolution" in the imperial realm. Giacobbi's major contribution was the phrase "French Union," which he first used in March 1945 to describe the future federation.

The Constitutional Committee was plainly at a loss in attacking the problem. Colonial deputies were so few in the Committee's ranks that it seemed logical and proper to call on the Committee on Overseas France for aid. The latter body, made up in majority of overseas representatives, was presumably better equipped to propose a specific plan.

It was a curious blend of federalism and centralization which finally emerged from the Overseas Committee's deliberations. Marius Moutet, its Socialist chairman (and shortly to become the perennial Minister for Overseas France), introduced the plan as "a leap into the unknown," but nevertheless defended it as a necessary gamble if France were to hold its colonies. The project adopted Giacobbi's term "French Union" as the name of the new structure, and declared that membership in his Union would be based on "free consent". The status of "subject" would be wiped out; every French national, from Parisian to neolithic Congo tribesman, would become a citizen and would enjoy full equality of rights. Each overseas area would be authorized to elect a territorial assembly, with the power to shape local policies and to control the local administration. Up to this point, the plan was federal in spirit. The federal capstone, however, was left off. The draft contained no provision for either a federal assembly or a federal executive at the top. Instead, the overseas areas would continue to send deputies to the French legislature in Paris, just as they had done to the Constituent Assembly. All natives would be given the suffrage, and both natives and white colonists in each area would be lumped together for voting purposes.

This plan, although less completely federal than some native deputies desired, had far-reaching implications. If membership in the Union were really to be based on free consent, a territory might conceivably refuse to enter the Union or might later secede. If the territorial assemblies were to receive broad local autonomy, they might strike out on the road leading to separatism. If the overseas populations were to receive fully equal rights, they might dominate parliament, for sixty million people lived overseas as compared to only forty million in continental France. Finally, if natives and colonists in each territory were to be lumped into joint electoral colleges, the small colonist element would be snowed under and would lose all representation both in the Paris legislature and in the territorial assemblies.

The Overseas Committee's plan offered something specific as a point of departure, but it certainly did not dissipate the fog enshrouding the French Union question. The long debate which followed was the most confused and contradictory of all the Constitutional Committee's labours. Unfortunately, the empire was far too complex an organization to be made over on the basis of pure logic; and when forty-two Frenchmen pit their Cartesian training and prejudices against an empirical problem, the outcome is likely to be cloudy.

As a general rule, the discussion set the Socialists and Communists against the M.R.P. and the minor parties. The Left was inclined to accept the Overseas Committee's plan for the time being, and to look beyond it toward complete federalism as the proper goal. Both Socialists and Communists dimly foresaw a future federation of peoples, each with its own culture, its own responsible government, and its own citizenship, crowned by some sort of federal parliament. They knew, however, that many of the colonies were still too primitive to function as states in a federation. Most of them agreed with the bureaucrat who, when told that Algeria wanted immediate statehood, snorted, "Nonsense! where would they get the stenographers?" Therefore they advocated that federalism be achieved on the installment plan.

Their aim was to begin at the bottom with territorial assemblies, and to expand the powers of these bodies as the natives' capacity for self-government increased. For the time being, matters of common interest to the whole Union would continue to be decided by the Paris legislature, in which the overseas territories would be represented on a minority basis. Once the territories reached maturity, this representation would be suppressed. The Paris legislature would become merely the national assembly for continental France, on a level with the assemblies of Madagascar, West Africa, and the rest. The common interests of the Union would then be taken over by a truly federal assembly. In preparation for that historic day, André Philip proposed to set up at once an advisory Council of the French Union. Out of this nucleus would eventually develop the dominant federal assembly.

The Left indignantly denied Rightist charges that its programme might lead to the breakup of the empire. "Federalism in no way implies separatism or secession," cried the Socialist Gilbert Zaksas; and Pierre Hervé added: "Does federalism lead to dismemberment? That is false. It would be more accurate to expect such a result from a policy of all-out assimilation". Yet the Leftists at times showed their embarrassment and their uncertainty. Hervé himself once let slip the remark that "we wish to lead the peoples under our protection toward autonomy or even independence"; and both Etienne Fajon and Guy Mollet admitted that "federalism might lead to a recognition of the right of secession". Nevertheless, the Left argued, the only proper solution was to let the overseas peoples evolve freely in whatever direction they might choose. To strait-jacket them would be the surest way to bring on trouble.

In contrast to this approach, the M.R.P. and Right were more cautious, more suspicious of federalism, more determined to maintain the tensile strength of imperial ties. Their hazy goal was not to develop a series of separate nations loosely joined in a federal union, but to make the overseas possessions into French provinces or, as Pierre Cot put it, "annexes to the mother country". The M.R.P.-led bloc was ready to abandon assimilation in the cultural sense, but intended to preserve it politically.

The principal author of this policy was the M.R.P. deputy Paul Viard, Dean of the Algiers Law School. Viard urged that separatist movements be headed off by converting all native subjects into French citizens at once. He realized, however, that the sixty million newly created French citizens might soon demand sixty per cent of the legislative seats in Paris, and that such a demand would be hard to refute. He therefore suggested that French citizenship be subdivided into two categories: "citizens of French statute" (i.e. those subject to French law) and "citizens of local statute" (those who would choose to retain their own law and customs, such as the Moslems and the peoples of Black Africa). By implication, citizens in the latter category would have no claim to full political equality. Besides, they would vote in a separate electoral college, which would prevent them from submerging the white

colonist element. Viard suggested that if the natives' self-esteem were offended by this plan, it could be soothed by giving them heavy representation in a purely advisory Council of the French Union. Even in such a Council, however, Viard argued that continental France ought to be given two-thirds of the seats. The overseas delegates, he insisted, must be "bathed in a French atmosphere".

The Left reacted vigorously against Viard's proposals to make the natives "second-class citizens" and to require them to vote in a separate electoral college. "The most profound aspiration of the native populations," asserted Marius Moutet, "is to feel that they are treated on a basis of equality". Maintenance of the double electoral college, he warned, would be regarded as a symbol of racism and might stimulate separatism. Mohand Achour, an Algerian Arab sitting as a substitute Socialist committeeman, protested at the idea of two types of citizenship. "Is there such a difference between Moslems and occidentals?" he asked ironically. "The former keep all their wives under one roof, while the latter have a woman in every quarter. [Laughter; protests from the M.R.P.]" The Left also questioned the wisdom of forcing either first- or second-class French citizenship on native peoples who might prefer to become citizens of Madagascar, Viet Nam, or some other federated state within the French Union.

The product of this long and fuzzy debate was a series of a half-dozen articles scattered through the constitutional draft, so loose and vague that no party voted against them. At bottom, these articles embodied most of the Left-wing demands; they left the future almost completely open. Even the M.R.P. and Right agreed to base membership in the Union on "free consent". They knew that in practice the phrase would be little more than a pious wish, or even a "pharisaism," as Paul Coste-Floret bluntly put it. The draft forbade discrimination based on colour or beliefs, and specifically outlawed forced labour. It endowed the native populations with "all the rights attached to the status of citizen," but it purposely avoided a choice among "French citizenship," "citizenship of the French Union", or citizenship of a local

territory such as Madagascar. No guarantee of the double electoral college was included, and the Left wing majority promptly abolished it in the new electoral law. By general consent, all the overseas territories were granted elective assemblies, plus the right to send deputies to the legislature in Paris. The Left proceeded to vest the new territorial assemblies with relatively broad powers to control the administration. Besides, the colonial administration was revolutionized; the post of governor was abolished, and it was decided that in his place there would be a political figure subject to direct control by the Paris assembly.

The Committee's longest controversy occurred over the nature of the new Council of the French Union. Once the principle of its creation was accepted by all parties, the M.R.P. and Right swung their weight behind the idea of making it an upper house of parliament. They urged that it participate in electing the president of the Republic and that it have the right to examine all bills adopted by the National Assembly. Both Communists and Socialists absolutely refused to let bicameralism be brought in thus through the back door; they set up the Council as a narrowly limited body with purely advisory powers on questions affecting the whole Union. Some Leftists viewed the Council as a body which might eventually develop into the real unicameral assembly of the French Union; but all Leftists were determined not to let it grow into a new Senate.

The French Union structure which finally emerged from Committee was a pretty nebulous affair, marred by gaps even more than by inconsistencies. Some skeptical Frenchmen preferred to describe it as "an insufficiently licked bear." But at least it did not try to force the polyglot empire into a rigid, logical framework. With its hybrid character of federalism and centralization, it was capable of future development in almost any direction. In a time of uncertainty, that was perhaps a virtue.

Chapter 5 -

XI. Revolution in a spare moment
(on the reforms introduced by the
first Constituent Assembly)

p.169.

..... It pointed the way toward a new colonial policy by promoting the natives to full citizenship, by abolishing all forms of forced labour in the empire, and by establishing an "overseas development fund" to finance projects of economic and social betterment.

Chapter 5 -

XII. Stillbirth of a constitution
pp.179-180

From the empire came returns which deserved more attention than they got. Without exception, wherever white colonist voters were in the majority the constitution was rejected; wherever native voters dominated it was approved. The key to these results was the fact that citizens alone were allowed to vote. Throughout North Africa, Black Africa, and Madagascar, citizenship was restricted almost entirely to the white colonists. They balked at the prospect of new political and social guarantees for the natives, at the threat that the white minority would be swamped by a flood of new citizens, and at the idea of relaxing the bonds of empire. Only in territories where the natives had long since been promoted from subject to citizen (Senegal, French India, and the four "old colonies") was the constitution approved by huge and triumphant majorities. These results suggested that the French Union problem had merely been skirted by the first Constituent Assembly, and that the new Assembly would find itself faced with a far more complex dispute. Upon its successful solution might depend the fate of the empire.

Chapter 6 -
I. The will of the people
pp.188-190.

When party leaders shifted their field of vision to the overseas election results, they were suddenly struck by the possibility that the sixty-four "colonials," so obscure in the First Constituent Assembly, might actually hold the balance of power in the Second Constituent. The elections confirmed the rough cleavage between French colonist and native voters which had already appeared in the referendum. Most of the colonists were by now obsessed by the Black Perio, and chose conservative deputies (usually U.D.S.R. or M.R.P.) committed to defend the rights of the white minority. Native political leaders, on the other hand, had definitely decided to throw in their lot with the Socialists or the Communists, who would fight to preserve the rights won in the defunct Assembly. As a result, the Left parties picked up additional strength in Black Africa, Madagascar, and the Antilles -- not enough to offset the M.R.P. victory in continental France, yet sufficient to close the gap considerably.

Most striking of all were the Algerian results. In place of Dr. Bendjelloul's colourless group of "tame" Arabs who had sat in the First Assembly, a vigorous Arab party called "Friends of the Manifesto" swept eleven of the thirteen native seats. All of the Manifesto deputies, including their leader Ferhat Abbas, had just emerged from prison, where they had been held since the bloody Algerian riots of May 1945. Their programme was little known in France, but it was presumed to be extreme. Abbas himself, a handsome, hawk-nosed pharmacist of Sétif, had once been a follower of Dr. Bendjelloul and an exponent of the complete assimilation of Algeria by France. He himself was a product of assimilation: educated in French Algerian schools, he was the son of an Arab official who had reached the dignity of Commander of the Legion of Honour. After serving as a volunteer on the Western front in 1939-1940, Abbas has brusquely reversed his position, and in his Manifesto issued in 1943, had demanded "a free Algeria joined to a free France". Shortly after his election, he was credited with remarking that "the Algerians are tired of being the bastard sons of France". His declared goal was autonomy rather than complete

independence, but there were some rumors of an alliance between Abbas and Messali Hajd, exiled leader of an extremist faction which demanded that all ties with France be broken. He was also known to be in contact with the Moslem reformist groups called the Oulemas, whose programme was pan-Islamic. Time was to show, however, that Abbas was far more loyal to France than his chief rival Messali.

The effect which a noisy group of Algerian autonomists might have on the constitutional discussions was obvious. But in addition, party leaders quickly calculated that if Abbas should throw his strength to the Communists and Socialists, he would raise the Left wing's total to 293 votes, or exactly half the membership of the Assembly. The potential importance of the eleven-man Manifesto group was therefore far out of proportion to its size. In subsequent months, Abbas was to take full advantage of his key position, and to assume a role of peculiar importance in the new Assembly.

Chapter 6 -

III. Voice from the wilderness
(on de Gaulle's programme of
June 1946) pp.194, 197-198.

..... Third, the French Union must be completely rebuilt on federal principles, with the initial federal organs to be set up at once by the constitution.

.....

What Capitant tried to do was to integrate the idea of a strong executive with de Gaulle's new thesis of imperial federalism. The blueprint which he drew up was strange and wonderful to behold. It maintained the parliamentary system for continental France, but combined it with a presidential system for the French Union as a whole. The president of the Republic (and of the French Union) would appoint premiers in France and in certain other advanced parts of the Union. These premiers would be responsible to their respective legislatures, in true parliamentary fashion. In more backward areas, however, the president would name a kind of viceroy and a ministry responsible only to the president himself. In addition, a federal cabinet for the entire French Union would be set up in Paris to administer foreign affairs, national defence, and finance, and this cabinet would be directly responsible to the president.

Capitant was frank to admit that his scheme would make the French president one of the most powerful men on earth. Such authority, he contended, is necessary in the modern world; every great power today possesses a strong executive. He also accepted as obvious the fact that de Gaulle was the only living Frenchman capable of filling such a post. He believed that de Gaulle would be able to establish the system so solidly that it could continue to function even if weaker men were to succeed him as president.

A far more significant remnant of Socialist-Communist co-operation had to do with the French Union. During the life of the Second Constituent Assembly, that issue finally emerged from the fog into the spotlight, and threatened to dominate the entire constitutional debate.

Before the Assembly convened, it had seemed likely that the French Union clauses of the Pierre Cot draft would survive intact. That aspect of the constitution had drawn virtually no criticism in continental France during the referendum campaign. Immediately after the referendum, the Gouin cabinet had met and had announced to the overseas natives that none of their newly promised rights would be withdrawn. M. Laurentie, Director of Political Affairs in the Ministry for Overseas France, had added publicly; "It can be affirmed without hesitation that the French Union system as defined by the First Constituent Assembly remains above dispute".

It did not take long for this rosy haze of unanimity to evaporate. Colonial deputies representing colleges of white voters had found the latter on the warpath against the First Constituent's French Union plan. These voters demanded a complete revision, and sent their deputies back to Paris filled with the fear of God and the elector. A second factor which shook many French politicians was the election of Ferhat Abbas and his fire-eating lieutenants in Algeria. The sentiment arose that if this was the fruit of the new policy of generosity, perhaps it would be wise to take another look at the tree which had borne it. They were disturbed too at reports of the rising nationalist movement in North Africa, and of an anti-French slogan allegedly in use among the Arabs: "Traveling bags or coffins!" Finally, de Gaulle's Bayeux speech, which placed the question of empire at the very heart of the constitutional problem, struck the M.R.P. in particular with a severe jolt.

Shortly after the new Assembly met, the M.R.P. suddenly announced its conversion to "progressive federalism" as the basis for the French Union. The term implied a sharp reversal of the M.R.P.'s earlier position. In the First Constituent it had followed the lead of Paul Viard, consistently rejecting the

Left-wing's federal doctrine in favour of a centralized French Union. The M.R.P.'s decision not to reappoint Viard to the Constitutional Committee was an early sign that its ideas were in a state of flux.

Curiously enough, the right-about-face of the M.R.P. did not mean that it had suddenly joined hands with the Left. On the contrary, it intensified the differences between them. Lengthy debate was necessary before party positions became relatively clear, and varying concepts of the term "federal" could be defined. When clarity finally emerged, the differences boiled down to these: (a) Should the framework of a federal commonwealth be set up at once from the top, by an Assembly dominated by continental Frenchmen; or should it be built from the bottom over a period of years? (b) Should the constitution guarantee a share in government to the white colonist minority; or should the colonists be left to shift for themselves, a tiny minority in a huge native electorate?

To the Socialists and Communists, it seemed logical to build a federal French Union from below, and to delay its completion until the colonial populations could send their fair share of constitutional architects. The existing Assembly, they felt, was unrepresentative of the overseas natives, for only ten per cent of the deputies were colonials. They wished to begin with local assemblies in overseas area, elected by a suffrage that would make no distinction between natives and French colonists. Each assembly, they argued, should work out its local statute of government in collaboration with the Paris parliament. The Left felt that its programme could be achieved by re-enacting, with slight changes, the loose and nebulous French Union clauses of the Pierre Cot draft. Its version of federalism was strongly backed by the overseas native deputies, whose votes were so important to the Socialists and Communists. Political advantage thus fused with idealistic motives in crystallizing the Left's viewpoint.

The M.R.P.'s variety of progressive federalism, on the other hand, sprang from ideas similar to those of de Gaulle. Both the M.R.P. and de Gaulle feared that unless positive imperial bonds were created at once, the empire might fall apart before the Union could be consummated. The M.R.P. felt, therefore, that the Assembly must immediately set up federal organs in Paris. The president of the republic must be given the additional title of president of the French

Union; and an Assembly of the French union must be created, distinct from the two-house French parliament, to deal with matters affecting the whole Union. When pinned down, the M.R.P. spokesman Paul Coste-Floret admitted that this assembly would be given little power at first; but he argued that its authority would grow gradually. The M.R.P. also insisted that the structure of government in the various overseas territories should be determined in Paris, in order to keep the degree of local autonomy within bounds. Finally, it demanded that some seats in all elected bodies be reserved for the white colonist minority. This M.R.P. programme won strong support from the Rassemblement des Gauches and the Right, some of whose deputies proposed to go even further. They even suggested a "second-class" citizenship for the natives, and they proposed that all the native deputies be shifted out of the Paris parliament into the powerless Assembly of the French Union.

As the two sides squared off for a showdown fight, the coloured and Arab deputies decided that in union there might be strength. They therefore seceded from the old Intergroup of Overseas Deputies (which included colonists as well as natives) and set up a narrower but tighter-knit Intergroup of Native Deputies. The dominant figure in this new body was Ferhat Abbas, who, with his ten Algerian followers, served as a pole of attraction which had been lacking in the earlier Assembly. Visible proof of this influence was furnished on the floor of the Assembly, where coloured deputies from other colonies gradually began to migrate to the benches adjoining the Manifesto party. First came the two Madagascar autonomists, then two coloured members of the U.D.S.R., and finally a scattering of representatives from Black Africa. Their arrival shifted the Right-Left balance just enough to give the Left a clear majority once more.

The Native Intergroup's ideas on the French Union were incorporated in a draft plan put together by Abbas himself. On July 31 that plan, with some modifications, was accepted by the Constitutional Committee by a twenty-one to twenty margin. The victory was a major one, and the possibilities of the plan were formidable. It was built around the Socialist-Communist interpretation of progressive federalism, with the Union to be built from the bottom over a

period of years. Each overseas territory would be free to enter the French Union as either (a) a free state linked to France by international treaty, (b) an autonomous unit, or (c) an integral part of France proper. By a loophole consciously placed in the draft, any territory might also choose to remain outside the French Union. Full French citizenship would be granted to all residents of the Union except those already possessing another citizenship (e.g., the Moroccans). Every remnant of inequality between native resident and white settler would be wiped out. On the French Union issue, the Left wing's triumph was total; but it was also temporary. During the weeks that followed, that issue was destined to bring the threat of a cabinet crisis, and to produce the intervention of President Bidault himself.

The French Union problem was the final topic on the Committee's agenda. Six weeks had sufficed to unravel the rejected constitution and to reweave its pattern in slightly different form. On August 2 came the climatic vote on the revised draft as a whole; and just as in April, one major party refused to go along with its rivals. This time it was the Communists who declared that "the project exceeds the limits of reasonable compromise," and who threatened to carry their opposition into the referendum unless changes were made on the floor of the Assembly. The prospect of three-party unity seemed further off than ever, especially since the M.R.P. had no special desire to win over the Communists. Paul Coste-Floret, the M.R.P.'s Reporter-General, had little of Pierre Cot's zeal to evangelize the heathen; he would be satisfied to hold together the Centre bloc. Yet, strangely enough, he was to succeed in achieving Cot's goal of tripartite unity, and the unwitting author of his success was to be Charles de Gaulle.

A special source of hard feeling was the fact that the Algerian and Malagasy autonomists controlled the fate of several important amendments. Whenever the Assembly split into Right and Left blocs, the handful of deputies around Ferhat Abbas (eleven Algerians plus four natives from Madagascar, the Comores Islands, and French India) were enough to give the Left victory. For example, they enabled the Left to beat off a final M.R.P.-Right-wing attempt to salvage freedom of instruction; the margin was 274 to 272. M.R.P. and Rightist leaders were exasperated at this "alien interference" in the affairs of continental France. They asked bitterly if the voters would be presented this time with "a Communist-Socialist-Islamic constitution" as a substitute for the Pierre Cot draft. In vain Abbas pointed out that he and his followers were not in Paris by choice, and that they would much prefer to sit in a new Algerian parliament. The ill feeling persisted nevertheless.

Those final constitutional skirmishes centered around one major issue -- the character of the French Union -- and two relatively minor ones -- the method of electing the upper house, and the question of secret or open ballot in choosing the president. In the upper house dispute, it was the M.R.P. which retreated far enough to prevent a Right-Left split; in the other two cases, the Socialists and Communists gave ground.

The upper house issue was the first to be settled. Late in August the Socialists had shifted over to the Communist position, favouring popular election by proportional representation rather than indirect election by the local councils. The inevitable result would be to weaken the upper house still further by making it a political mirror of the lower house. For two weeks the M.R.P. stubbornly refused all the offers of compromise suggested by the tireless Vincent Auriol. Its unyielding attitude reflected the intraparty stress caused by de Gaulle's intervention; many M.R.P. backbenchers had decided that a rupture with the Socialists would be better than a break with de Gaulle. All the prestige and influence of Georges Bidault were needed to tip the scales. Bidault, appearing before an M.R.P. caucus on September 11, pleaded with his colleagues to shake off their hypnotic fear of de Gaulle and to accept the Socialists' compromise offer. His appeal won the caucus over, but only by a bare six-vote majority. The compromise was accepted, and a Right-Left split narrowly averted. The solution provided that the first Council of the Republic would be chosen by indirect popular election (as the Left wished), but that the permanent system for election the Council would be postponed for decision by the future assembly.

The French Union showdown was longer and more complex. Bidault, who had gotten the original chapter withdrawn for revision, presented the Constitutional Committee with a substitute plan built around the M.R.P.'s concept of "progressive federalism". It plugged up the loophole of secession, assured the white colonist minority of special representation, converted the native people into "citizens of the French Union" rather than full-fledged French citizens, guaranteed that the Paris parliament would measure out the autonomy to be granted to each overseas area, and provided for the immediate creation of three federal organs in Paris -- the president, an Assembly of the French Union, and a High Council of States.

The Left-wing-native bloc in the Committee set out at once to water down Bidault's proposal. It was so successful that Bidault once more had to use personal pressure; he appeared before the Committee on September 19 and made it plain that he would resign as president if his plan were not restored in its original purity. The Left wing, faced a second time with the threat of a cabinet crisis, again capitulated. On September 20, the Committee accepted the Bidault-sponsored plan with only minor changes.

That decision immediately produced a counter crisis. Ferhat Abbas and several other native deputies sitting in the Committee as alternates or observers walked out, and the entire Intergroup of Native Deputies decided to resign from the Assembly en masse unless Bidault would compromise. That afternoon, when the Assembly began its general debate on the French Union chapter; every native quietly arose and left the hall. Even wizened little Prince Douala Manga Bell of Cameroon, the sole coloured deputy on the M.R.P. benches, filed meekly out when tapped on the sholder by a fellow African. It looked as though the much-advertised new imperial federation would be set up by fiat of the mother country alone.

At this critical moment Auriol and Marius Moutet, Socialist Minister for Overseas France, stepped in as conciliators. They brought Bidault and the native deputies together for a lengthy talk, out of which came an agreement in extremis. The natives agreed to accept the Bidault plan with its rigid organization and its guarantees of French sovereignty, while Bidault agreed to alter two provisions which smacked of racial inequality. As a result, the double electoral college was transferred from the constitution to the less sacrosanct electoral law, and the native peoples were assured of "first-class" citizenship. All Frenchmen and natives in the Union (except citizens of the associated states like Morocco) were given a dual status as "French citizen" and "citizen of the French Union". The latter phrase retained only one purpose: it applied to citizens of the associated states as well, and thus brought the Moroccans, Tunisians, and Viet-Nameese into the fold.

Abbas and the native deputies were back in their regular places the next day, but a residue of bitterness remained. When Bidault praised the Assembly for adopting his plan and described the French Union as "an institution whose like cannot be found anywhere else in the world," the natives pointedly refused to join the applause and exchanged sour looks. Further evidence of resentment came a few days later, when Abbas dropped his usual conciliatory tone and brought on the most violent parliamentary incident since prewar days. As Abbas mounted to the tribune for the last time, a Right-wing deputy shouted, "What's that salaud doing here anyhow?" Provoked by this greeting and by further interruptions, Abbas broke up the meeting when he charged that France had not been able to defend its empire in 1940, and that French colonial policy had been one of the worst blots on the record of the Third Republic; half of the deputies immediately walked out, and one group of firebrands headed by Maurice Schumann laid siege to the tribune in an effort to drag Abbas down by force. The Communists naturally rallied to his defence, and a free-for-all was narrowly averted. The incident, occurring in the final hours of the constitutional debate, was in sharp contrast to the First Constituent Assembly's love feast over French Union matters. Perhaps it was also a portent of the storms which were to shake the Union during the months to come.

Chapter 6 -
VII. St. Charles and the
Three-Headed Dragon (on the
second referendum, 13 October 1946)
p.230

The echoes of de Gaulle's pre-referendum attack on the constitution reached overseas France, and probably influenced the voting there on October 13; the result was a repetition of April, even though the French Union clauses had been greatly modified since then. White colonist voters again refused to approve the constitution wherever they dominated the polls; but where native voters were in control, the majority was heavily "yes". The native attitude was realistic. They knew that they had lost ground since April, but the project nevertheless still contained some important new rights. Besides, their Socialist and Communist leaders recommended adoption. The white colonists, however, were not appeased by the improvements in the French Union chapter which Bidault had engineered. To them, the empire was still in danger, even if the worst mistakes of men like Pierre Cot had been corrected. In fact, they generally voted down the "improved" draft by even greater majorities than in April. The mental barrier overseas between colonizer and colonized was evidently getting more rigid rather than less so. In direct proportion, the need for able statesmanship in Paris increased. Clearly, creating the French Union would not be an easy process.

Chapter 7 -
II. The spirit and structure of
the Constitution
pp.242-243.

The French Union's mechanism is a curious blend of logic and realism. To begin with, all parts of the Union are classified into one of two broad categories: (a) the French Republic, including continental France, the assimilated overseas departments like Martinique and Guiana, and the overseas and the overseas territories like Equatorial Africa or New Caledonia; (b) the associated states - Morocco, Tunisia, and the various segments of the projected Indo-Chinese Federation. The way is left open for the overseas territories to evolve either toward full assimilation as French departments or toward autonomy as associated states. Their status cannot be changed, however, without the consent of parliament in Paris.

The constitution provides for three new quasi-federal organs in Paris. The first will be the president of the French Union -- ex officio title of the president of the republic. The second is the High Council of States, a consultative body composed of delegates of the associated states as well as of the French Republic. The High Council will resemble a collection of ambassadors from states linked together by international treaties. It represents a rather feeble attempt to co-ordinate the policies of the associated states with those of France. The third new organ, the Assembly of the French Union, will not include representatives of the associated states unless the latter voluntarily choose to participate. Half of its membership will come from the overseas areas, half from continental France. Its initial powers will be purely advisory; it will have the right to vote resolutions and to express its opinion on proposed laws referred to it by the National Assembly or the cabinet. The constitution-makers presumed that all bills affecting the Union as a whole would be referred to the Assembly of the French Union.

For the immediate future, this commonwealth structure will amount to little more than a façade. Real power to legislate for the Union as a whole remains in the hands of the French parliament, which contains a small proportion

of overseas representatives (at present, roughly ten per cent of the National Assembly and twenty per cent in the Council of the Republic). A limited degree of local self-government has been granted by setting up representative assemblies in all the overseas territories. One African deputy has rather unjustly stigmatized these assemblies as "caricatures of democracy". They possess relatively narrow powers to advise and control the governor, and most of them assure some representation to the white minority. Algeria has recently been granted an assembly with somewhat greater autonomy, but the federalist hopes of Ferhat Abbas are still unrealized. As of 1947, "progressive federalism" has not progressed very far. If that doctrine turns out to be more than a mere phrase, the day may come when the Assembly of the French Union will develop into the central organ of the whole system, with a federal cabinet responsible to it. At best, however, that day lies in the misty future.