Dear Simon:

The situation in France has recently deteriorated to such an extent that the de Gaulle government and the democratic regime are considered to be in a very precarious state. Enclosed is a report describing the general features of the present situation.

The Jewish aspect is not yet very acute; but it will certainly become so in case of a sharp change either in the political regime of France or in the status of Algeria. As you know, up to now General de Gaulle has only advanced the slogan of auto-determination for Algeria, without any indication as to what is meant by this term. Few people in France, however, believe that the Algerian problem can be solved without granting tremendous concessions to the majority Moslem population, concessions which will probably come close either to full internal autonomy or total independence. With such a radical change of the political structure of Algeria, the Cremieux decrees which formed the basis of the Jewish position in Algeria will probably go overboard, although it is possible that the French will include the Jews among the minorities to be protected in any future arrangement.

As you also know, the FLN has attempted several times in recent years to exert pressure on the Algerian Jewish community to take a favorable attitude toward the Liberation Movement. The organized community always responded that as an entity it must not take any step on political matters and that the choice is left to each individual Jew. This reply, of course, does not satisfy the FLN. On the other hand, some French extremists are pressing the Jews for repeated declarations of their loyalty to France.

At the present moment, it would be difficult for Jews to develop any kind of action program. It should be clear, however, that this confused situation cannot last much longer, and that France and Algeria have reached a stage when momentous decisions will have to be made.

This first report gives a general view of the situation, and from now on we shall keep you informed on every important development in it.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

s/ Zach

Zachariah Shuster

Enclosure
France today faces an onrushing political crisis of the first magnitude, a crisis which if not checked may mean the end not only of the de Gaulle regime but of democracy in France, with all this implies for Europe and the rest of the world. The issue is the same one that has plagued France since November 1, 1954, that caused the downfall of the Fourth Republic, and that is isolating France in the councils of the world -- the war in Algeria.

Because of the failure of de Gaulle to resolve the Algerian conflict and, worse, because, at present, he gives no sign of having a policy that promises an end to this struggle, an ugly mood is growing in France. Both the left, which wanted a negotiated peace in Algeria, and the right, which wanted a firm commitment that France would stay in Algeria, have given up on de Gaulle, and are ever more vehement in their attacks on the regime and each other. Again, as in the critical days of May, 1958, that brought de Gaulle to power, one hears rumors of plots and possible coups d'etat. Again, as in 1958, there is even mention of possible civil war.

Jews have a special reason for concern over the fate of France. The largest Jewish community of continental Europe west of the Soviet Union, some 350,000 strong, resides in this land. Overthrow of democracy here would undoubtedly mean changes in the present position of this community, and a forthcoming crisis might easily bring to the fore, and possibly to seats of power, elements notorious for their anti-Semitism.

To understand the present rising temperature in France one must realize that, in many respects, political life in this country has been in a state of suspended animation during the past two years. For a number of reasons only de Gaulle, really, could hope to act. Not just because he was the figure who towered above all others on the national and international scene, or because of the overwhelming 80% majority in the 1958 referendum approving his taking over of power -- but, essentially, because he was the only one considered able to de-fuse the 1958 crisis that had almost brought on civil war, and to impose an uneasy peace on all protagonists, regardless of their views, until he could find a solution in Algeria.

That he move toward a solution, and rally the country around it, however, was the tacit condition which made his real power possible and gave him the whip hand over elements like those led by Ortiz and Lagailarde, who unsuccessfully went to the barricades in Algiers last year in a challenge to de Gaulle's authority.
Now, however, the period of "waiting for de Gaulle" is obviously over. The conflicting forces in France neutralized since 1958 by hopes in, or fears of, de Gaulle are recrystalizing for action, ready to try to force the government's hand, to get acceptance of, or to impose, policies of their own.

Since de Gaulle's last press conference on September 5, there have been a multitude of signs of the volcanic pressures to which French political life is currently subject. The press conference was an important turning-point. It had been anxiously awaited as a possible new start toward negotiations with the FLN, the Algerian Liberation forces, following the almost immediate break-up of conversations between French and Algerian representatives at Melun last summer. But de Gaulle, merely re-affirming old positions, gave no new lead or direction. A dead-end had been reached. A dead-end, or lack of well-defined aims as to what France wants to do in Algeria is, however, no longer acceptable to many important sectors of French opinion. Reaction to the trial of 23 persons charged by a French military court with belonging to the so-called Jeanson group brought this out sharply.

Francois Jeanson, a secondary school philosophy teacher, had organized in France a group of persons to help the Algerian cause, by collecting funds for the FLN and by sheltering FLN emissaries clandestinely working in France. At the trial, the defendants (Jeanson himself had fled the country) made no secret of their pro-FLN sentiments. Indeed, they were proud of them, arguing that by aiding the FLN to independence they had been speaking for the true France; and they hoped to make theirs a trial of principle that would arouse public condemnation of the Algerian conflict.

The trial is over and the defendants -- portrayed as heroes by some, condoned by others, or denounced as traitors -- sentenced, some receiving up to ten years of imprisonment. The waves of feeling it aroused are still in motion. The French press currently resounds with manifestos of all kinds, arising out of the trial: that of the "121," of the "67," of the "185" and others.

Three major trends of thought among influential French intellectual, artistic and political circles lie behind these numbers. The first manifesto, that of the "121," signed by such notables as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Simone Signoret, Daniele Delorme, and others proclaimed inter alia: "We respect and judge justified refusal to take up arms against the Algerian people. We respect and judge justified the conduct of Frenchmen who believe it their duty to bring help and protection to the Algerians oppressed in the name of the French people. The cause of the Algerian people, contributing in decisive fashion to the ruination of the colonial system, is the cause of all free men."
The second manifesto, that of the "67," signed by men like Professors Georges Gurvitch and Jankelevitch, Henri Torres, Edouard Depreux and Daniel Mayer, does not go as far as that of the "121." It declares that there is no other solution to the war than a negotiated peace; that the government is keeping the true facts of the situation from the French people, that French youth face a crisis of conscience, and that Frenchmen now must choose between "the conceptions of the ultras... and a will for peace without equivocation and without any trickery."

The third, that of the "135," including Marechal Juin, Jules Romains, Henri Bordeaux and Thierry Maulnier, denounces the action of the "121" and asserts that "systematically to sully and calumniate the army is an act of treason."

Deeply moral as well as political and ideological considerations influence the various positions in France today with regard to Algeria. Advocates of refusal to take up arms against Algeria take this stand, among other reasons, because of methods that have been used in pursuit of this conflict. There is in France a whole literature about torture that has been committed by police and army, on Frenchmen as well as Algerians, and in Paris as well as in Algeria; about the bombing of Algerian villages in the leading zones of insurrection; about the mass deportation of literally hundreds of Algerians from their villages to camps where they languish in miserable conditions. Youth, and university youth particularly, are seriously debating whether, when called up as conscripts, they should participate in a struggle where such methods have been used.

On the other side there are those who are deeply convinced that, in Algeria, France is really defending the values of the Occident both against the Kremlin and against pan-Arabic fanaticism and racism; and who point to the terrorism and assassinations by the FLN of French and Algerians, not just in Algeria but in metropolitan France as well, where some 400,000 Moslems live.

Government handling of the Jeanson trial and of the manifesto of the "121" aroused subsequent storms of protest from all sides. Following the trial, which was marked by a welter of procedural debates and vigorous dramatic exchanges between the lawyers for the defense and the judges of the military court, the government issued decrees increasing penalties against persons encouraging insubordination, and altering the rules of trial testimony.

The government also established a series of regulations for the radio and television (which is completely government-controlled in France), stating that the names of the signatories of the "121" manifesto must never be mentioned, and that no productions in which these persons are concerned could be presented. It also said it would give no subventions -- and almost all French films depend on some government subvention -- to films in which
signatories of the "121" manifesto are involved. It announced that government employees who had signed this manifesto should be removed from their posts. Finally, it questioned some twenty persons (choosing the least-known of the signatories, apparently) to try to discover who wrote and circulated the manifesto.

These acts of the government produced vigorous dissent. A great many persons who did not hold the views of the "121" have come out against what are felt to be serious restrictions on fundamental freedoms of opinion and expression.

The Jeanson trial and action of the "121" resulted in equally vehement reactions by groups which felt the government was not being severe enough with traitors to France. Various French veterans' organizations staged a protest rally at the Arch of Triumph, attended by Marechal Juin. On this occasion, rightist extremists, several thousand strong, went screaming toward the Elysee Palace, hurling both imprecations against de Gaulle and anti-Semitic remarks, in a fashion not seen since May 13, 1958, when similar tactics were used against the Fourth Republic.

From Algeria moreover came reports that many army officers were deeply perturbed by the trend of opinion expressed by the "121," by demands for negotiation with the FLN, (the Socialist, MRP and Radical parties have recently passed resolutions urging the government to parley with the FLN), and by what they considered lack of government firmness.

Nor is the rising criticism of the regime limited to Algeria. De Gaulle's desire to have France become an independent atomic power, his concept of a European third force independent of the United States and NATO, his economic policies, are all under attack today in a way that would not have been possible a year ago. Living costs have been rising again, and the French rate of economic growth has slackened off. De Gaulle himself is still cheered mightily on his various speaking tours around the country, but grumbling about the government has grown.

All this has encouraged both open and covert opposition.

There was considerable speculation as to whether the recent declaration of General Raoul Salan against any Algerian auto-
determination, generally recognized as an attack on de Gaulle, had not been the premature signal for the execution of a plot to take over the government. (Salan, who was commander of French armed forces in Algeria at the time of the May 13 uprising of the colons and who, in effect, had sanctioned it, was called to Paris and ordered not to return to Algeria.) Georges Bidault, former premier, an avowed enemy of de Gaulle, and one of the
stauncest advocates of Algérie Française, recently told Italian newspapermen that there was a "plan" among the army leaders to get rid of General de Gaulle. Jacques Soustelle, former plotter against the IVth Republic and erstwhile ardent Gaullist fired over a year ago from his post as State Minister, is increasingly active in efforts to rally opposition, and has announced his intention of forming a new political party.

Two key factors -- and still the great unknowns in the equation -- are the attitude of the French army and of the French masses. It was the army that finally brought down the IVth Republic. The colons of Algeria would have been powerless in the long run against the IVth Republic, had not army leaders like Salan and Massu, after considerable hesitation, joined with them. The French army -- which feels that it lost Indo-China, Tunisia and Morocco through no fault of its own but because of poor political leadership -- is no longer merely an arm of the French civil power. Many of its generals, colonels and other officers see the army as the only healthy and unifying element that can purge a decadent nation of its "traitors" and "inner enemies," and are determined to bring the war in Algeria to a successful conclusion, cost what it may. Different army cabals apparently try to develop policies of their own. The necessity for appeasing the army, it is generally believed, is one reason that de Gaulle has not been able to move toward peace in Algeria. Despite all this, the army leaders might not wish to embroil the country in civil strife, assuming this were the only way they could achieve their ends, if there were real and tangible opposition to them.

When last the army threatened France with invasion from Algeria in 1958, just before de Gaulle came to power, there was no real opposition. The masses of metropolitan France were, by and large, apathetic both to the appeals of the Algerian colons (who had expected considerable support) and of the parliamentary leaders of the IVth Republic. What the popular attitude would be now, in case of a threatened conflict, it is impossible to say.

Yet certainly France cannot continue along the present lines, given the present pressures. And so, with de Gaulle losing his power as the stabilizing force, the prospect of a new crisis is developing with frightening rapidity.

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Several factors are involved in a consideration of what the position of Jews in France would be in the face of such developments.

Jews are to be found among the supporters of virtually every trend of opinion with regard to Algeria. One of the defendants in the Jeanson trial, Jeanine Cahen, was Jewish. So were several signers of the various manifestos.
A number of Jews are ardent de Gaulle supporters. Others have left him, and are now more closely tied to Soustelle. And among the French in Algeria who took to the barricades at the behest of Ortiz and Lagaillarde some 20%, it has been estimated, were Jews.

There is no such thing as a "Jewish position" with regard to the current burning issues in France. The Grand rabbinate limits itself to occasional pious declarations of hopes for peace and friendship among men in Algeria. Other Jewish community groups and organizations have taken no stand. Nonetheless, the bulk of Jewish opinion can be safely considered to favor de Gaulle, either because of a positive attitude toward him or simply because he is preferred to possible alternatives. Leaving aside the sizeable Jewish Communist minority, the bulk of the Jewish community and its leadership favors continued French presence in Algeria.

In addition to having the sentiments common to Frenchmen of a similar persuasion, some Jews are influenced by fears that an independent Algeria would be another danger to Israel; others are concerned about the fate of the 140,000 Jews in Algeria, virtually all French citizens and virtually all wholeheartedly committed to France staying in that land.

Nonetheless, many of the French extremist elements -- such as those who demonstrated on the Champs Elysees -- lay the blame for French difficulties in Algeria on Jews, consider Jews such as former French Premier Mendes-France and former Deputy Daniel Mayer as the people who have lost France her African empire, hold Jews responsible for such things as the existence of the Jeanson group. Special targets are l'Express, a liberal French weekly which in recent years has served as a rallying point for advocates of negotiated peace in Algeria, edited by Jean-Jacques Servan Schreiber, a Jew; and Edition de Minuit, a publishing house headed by Jerome Lindon, also Jewish, which has put out a number of books dealing with torture in Algeria.

There are, it must be remembered, a number of avowed anti-Semitic groups and periodicals in France. On occasion, they have been able to exert an influence all out of proportion to their real strength. One such occasion was when anti-Semites infiltrated the Poujade Movement, and gave it much of its ideological coloration. More relevant was their activity at the time of the downfall of the IVth Republic, which was such that a number of them were banned by the Pflimlin government because of their designs to overthrow the democratic system. The de Gaulle government has also taken similar action against certain of these groups, who re-formed under the Vth Republic, and for similar reasons. It is no secret that such groups have ties with army elements and with extremist colon groups.
in Algeria, and might play an important role if there were a successful revolt against the de Gaulle regime.

In case of such an eventuality, certain modifying factors could work to Jewish benefit, at least for some time. One is that there are close ties between the French and Israel military at almost all levels; and the French military are very favorably disposed to Israel, which they (and even the French anti-Semites) see as true defenders of the Occident and Western civilization against Nasser and the Moslem world. Another, as has been noted, is the cooperation of some Jews with even the most extremist elements.

These, however, are weak reeds. One must realistically face the possibility that, under certain circumstances, the basic security and position of Jews in France may shortly be threatened and may depend on how France tries to resolve its conflict in Algeria in the near future.