

THE MIGHTY PEN



by CHARLES GRANT

SOON AFTER U. S. forces landed in North Africa in World War II, the news swept across the desert to a remote French Foreign Legion outpost. Loyal to Free France, the commander assembled his troops.

"Men," he said, "we are in a unique position. The Americans are our friends. So now we must prepare to surrender to our Allies—a surrender in keeping with the dignity of France."

That night, the Legionnaires worked diligently to make the post bright and immaculate. Next morning a guard shouted excitedly: "The Americans are coming!"

In the distance a jeep chugged across the dunes, carrying four uniformed Americans.

"How brave they are!" the French commander said. "Only four of them to demand the surrender of our post!" Then he turned to his aide: "Form the company. We will march to meet them."

With a flourish of arms, the Legionnaires marched from the post. Leading his men, the commander saw the jeep stop. The four occupants got out and waited.

The commander halted a few yards from the Americans, then strode forward with great dignity. He clicked his heels and bowed. "Gentlemen," he said, "my sword!"

To his surprise, the Americans plunged into a huddled conference. Finally, impelled by a slight shove, one of them approached the commander and bowed mutely.

"And to whom," asked the commander, "do I have the honor of surrendering?"

"You have the honor, sir," the American replied politely, accepting the sword, "of surrendering to the Associated Press!"