

FRANCE'S FIRST DESERT OIL:

To the North African port of Philippeville comes the first of France's Sahara oil - ready for shipment across the Mediterranean to French refineries. Touggourt, 300 miles inland, is the receiving end of the Sahara pipeline; from this typical French African town, where white-robed Arab traders discuss their business on the sun-baked earth, the precious oil is loaded into tankers for the rail journey to Philippeville. To reach Touggourt, the oil has been pumped 125 miles across the desert by a six-inch pipeline.

Minister Max Lajeune comes to Touggourt, to see the first litres of oil drawn from the big storage tanks. This is an historic day for France; she has been working for years to tap the vast oil resources of the Sahara, and now at last the oil is here and on its way to the mother country. Desert oil does much to explain French sensitivity to Arab nationalism; and reminders of rebel work are not far to seek. It is France's ambition to be independent of the costly oil of the Middle East and the Caribbean - and that goal is within her grasp.