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Chairman: Mr. Miguel Rafael URQUIA (El Salvador).

AGENDA ITEM 63

Question of Algeria (A/3853) (*continued*)GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. AMADEO (Argentina) said that his delegation, which regretted that France had decided not to participate in the debate, would take an impartial attitude and would not yield to any emotional considerations, although it would not shirk its responsibilities. Its opinion and its vote would be determined by a careful examination of the facts.

2. With regard to the competence of the General Assembly, his delegation continued to believe that a faithful interpretation of the Charter of the United Nations necessarily led to the conclusion that the Organization had the right to deal with the question of Algeria. The Algerian conflict could not be regarded as a domestic problem; what was involved was not a struggle for power or a separatist movement within a national community, but a conflict between a metropolitan State and a territory geographically separated from it and largely inhabited by a community with well-defined racial and cultural characteristics plainly different from those of the metropolitan population. Moreover, the conflict was causing great concern in many countries and was constantly provoking serious frontier incidents.

3. Nevertheless, the competence of the United Nations was not unlimited. The Organization could not take measures of constraint with a view to influencing the course of events. On the hypothesis that the Algerian movement was one of national emancipation, it involved a historical process, governed by laws of its own which it was extremely difficult to change from outside. When Chateaubriand had tried, at the Congress of Verona in 1822, to organize the suppression of Spanish-American independence, his cause had been foredoomed from the outset, since that independence was an ineluctable historical event. Conversely, when England had sent troops to the River Plate region in 1806, hoping, *inter alia*, to stir up a rebellion of the Creoles against the King of Spain, the result of that outside intervention had been to give rise to a popular movement of loyalty to the Crown of Castile.

4. If Algeria was to obtain the right of self-government, it would be because the hour had struck for it to possess that right, and not because the United

Nations had conferred upon it the prerogatives of an independent State. It was not the task of the United Nations to make artificial transfers of sovereignty, but it was the Organization's duty to place all its resources at the disposal of the parties so as to ensure that political and social changes did not endanger international peace and took place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The Organization must not remain indifferent or neutral. Its existence was based on certain principles, which must be defended. Among those principles was that of the self-determination of peoples.

5. The operations in Algeria were not merely a police action; they amounted to out-and-out war. The metropolitan Power had mobilized forces much greater than those it had used against the forces of Abd-el-Kader at the time when Algeria had been conquered. Certain areas were under the authority of the insurgents, who possessed considerable forces and armaments.

6. The Argentine delegation could not associate itself with the condemnation of the Power responsible for governing Algeria that had been expressed during earlier debates. France had given much of itself to Algeria. Over a million of its sons, many of whom had been born in the Maghreb, lived in the territory. They had made great efforts to develop the Algerian economy. The Algerian Moslems had enjoyed generous hospitality in the metropolitan State. Hundreds of thousands of them lived and worked in the large towns of France. All that explained the tenacity with which France was fighting to keep Algeria.

7. On the other hand, the Arab population of Algeria constituted a cultural community with its own characteristics and, comprising as it did eight or nine million persons, represented by far the greater part of the total population. The Argentine delegation believed that the principle of the self-determination of peoples was applicable to the Arabs of Algeria, as it had recently been to other African peoples and to Asian peoples which were now sovereign States and Members of the United Nations.

8. It was thus the role of the United Nations to facilitate negotiations between the two parties. At the twelfth session, the General Assembly had expressed a wish which, unfortunately, did not seem to have had any practical effect. The struggle had continued with great bitterness, and hopes for a solution had not been realized. The French Government had taken measures which were intended to pacify Algeria. Among them were the plebiscite of September 1958, the elections of November 1958, and the offer of a cease-fire that General de Gaulle had made to the rebels on 23 October 1958, with a view to putting an end to hostilities. Those measures had not greatly changed the situation, since the rebel leaders had challenged the validity of the two popular consultations and had regarded the offer of

negotiations merely as an invitation to surrender. On 19 September 1958, the revolutionaries had established what they called a provisional government, which had immediately been recognized by several States of the Arab community.

9. None of those steps seemed to be really constructive or likely to bring a solution closer. The Argentine delegation did not mean to imply that the elections in Algeria had been in any way fraudulent, but it believed that the existing situation made a truly popular consultation virtually impossible. One of the first measures should, of course, be to ascertain the wishes of the majority of the Algerian people, but such consultation would be possible only when elections could be held either under impartial supervision or under the joint supervision of the parties.

10. The establishment of a provisional government in a foreign country was undoubtedly a political gesture which scarcely conformed with the rules of international law governing the recognition of a government by the community of nations. Nevertheless, the Argentine delegation could see no reason why that Government should not be regarded as representing the views of the rebels. The French Government could therefore negotiate with it without recognizing it as a government.

11. Indeed, there was only one alternative: either to undertake negotiations on bases acceptable to all or to continue that implacable war indefinitely.

12. The Argentine delegation was of course in favour of negotiation and considered that the United Nations should support that enterprise with all its moral authority. It was therefore prepared to vote for any draft resolution that might be submitted to that effect, on condition that it was not drafted in polemical terms, that it provided that the negotiations should be held on the basis of the principle of self-determination enshrined in the Charter and that it duly took into account the interests involved.

13. It was not for the General Assembly to establish the precise terms of an agreement acceptable to the parties. Nevertheless, he wished to make some remarks on the manner in which the negotiations should be carried on in order to avoid sterility.

14. The two extreme positions were, on the one hand, complete independence, and, on the other hand, total integration. Between those two extremes there seemed to be quite a wide range of intermediate, even though provisional, solutions. Any agreement on such an intermediary or partial solution would at least have the great advantage of bringing the armed conflict to an end and creating between the parties an atmosphere, if not of cordiality, at least of mutual respect, which might lead to a final settlement. That provisional solution should include, as a preliminary stage, elections recognized as authentic by all concerned.

15. In his opinion, no solution would be equitable unless it protected French interests in Algeria and especially the rights of the people of French origin who inhabited that territory. The French in Algeria were not foreigners; they were inhabitants, integrated into Algerian life and having equal rights with the Moslem community, and they too had something to say concerning the future of the territory. Of course, they could not determine that future by themselves, dis-

regarding the wishes of the majority, but whatever the final solution might be, they had the right to retain their cultural personality and the full exercise of their civic rights.

16. Until recent years, the relationship between the western European countries and the so-called "coloured" peoples had chiefly been one of dependence. Much criticism had been levelled against the colonial system and the justice of that criticism could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, mention had to be made of the great efforts the European countries had made to carry the benefits of civilization beyond their metropolitan frontiers. The spiritual influence of missionaries, the work of technicians, the struggle against epidemics and the establishment of political and legal systems were only some examples of those benefits, which largely compensated for errors and faults.

17. It now seemed, however, that the colonial system had ceased to be the normal form of relationship between the West and the other peoples of the world. The continuation of the colonial system, far from promoting understanding among peoples, would greatly prejudice it. Argentina's gratitude to Spain, which had given it a legal and moral system based on equality among the country's inhabitants, enabled it to state quite freely that the colonial system must be succeeded by a régime based on the sovereign equality of all States. Nevertheless, although it was gratified by the considerable progress made in that direction in the past few years and was happy to welcome new independent and free peoples into the United Nations, it did not wish their admission to be interpreted either as a sign of strife or an expression of the weakness of the countries which had hitherto exercised authority. Argentina sincerely hoped that equality between East and West would be established in a peaceful atmosphere, for the benefit of all mankind.

18. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) observed that the question of Algeria, an item of such great importance, was the last to be considered by the Committee solely because it had not been advisable to consider it before the results of the referendum and the election carried out by France were known. It was regrettable that France's seat should be vacant during the debate on Algeria. That was not a good omen for the Fifth Republic. It was particularly deplorable as France had made a number of promises at the twelfth session of the General Assembly. It was surely France's duty to report to the Assembly on how it had kept its word.

19. The hopes placed in General de Gaulle, the hero of a liberation movement, had been disappointed. The argument that the question lay within France's domestic jurisdiction had once again been advanced, although it had been completely refuted at preceding sessions. He would not take up that point again, or say anything about other aspects of the problem, such as Algeria's right to form an independent State or the atrocities of French repression, which had been adequately considered during the two previous sessions of the Assembly.

20. At the twelfth session, the General Assembly had unanimously adopted a resolution (resolution 1184 (XII)) indicating a goal to be attained and the means of attaining it. The goal had been a solution in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter and the means had been, on the one hand, the offer of good

offices made by Morocco and Tunisia and, on the other hand, the pourparlers to be entered into.

21. Unfortunately, France had categorically rejected the offer of good offices made by the two Heads of State, without any valid justification. It had gone even further: the bombardment of Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef had been carried out against one of the two countries which had proposed its good offices.

22. With regard to the pourparlers, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had stated its willingness to start them unconditionally, but France had not deigned to reply to its invitation. In the face of all logic, it had refused to budge from its original proposal: cease-fire, elections, and then negotiations. In other words, it had wished the Algerians to end hostilities, accept a constitution worked out by France and take part in elections whose object they had not helped to define. When they had done all that, they would be entitled to negotiate on the remaining points—but in the circumstances there could be nothing left on which they could negotiate.

23. General de Gaulle had actually mentioned negotiations during his press conference of 23 October 1958. It was a matter for regret that the parleys he had mentioned presupposed a surrender. He had invited the Algerian fighters to lay down their arms and return to their work and their homes without humiliation. But matters were not as simple as that. General de Gaulle's offer contained a contradiction: to cease fighting under the conditions he suggested would itself be an intolerable humiliation.

24. In the course of the same press conference, General de Gaulle had invited the Algerian fighters to send delegates to settle the question of the cessation of hostilities with the "authority". There was an Algerian government in exile. It had no intention of going to Paris to discuss anything with an "authority" it did not recognize. The normal procedure would be to organize talks between representatives of the two Governments in a neutral country. It was inconceivable that a Government at war with another would cease fire, demobilize its army and go to its enemy's country to discuss the cessation of hostilities. Could General de Gaulle have forgotten how he had acted when he himself had been the head of a Government in exile? The Algerian people would end the war only when its right to independence had been recognized.

25. Instead of offering a solution of the problem in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter, France persisted in stating: "Algeria is France". The policy of integration followed under that slogan was entirely baseless, for the Algerian people had aspirations, a language and a culture which were entirely different from those of the French. That was why that policy had failed, whether it had been called by its true name or called pacification or fraternization—in any case, fraternization was possible only in freedom, which therefore remained the primary condition for any settlement of the question. It was for that reason that the Statute of September 1947 and, more recently, the loi-cadre (basic law) had failed. France's present policy was also doomed to failure because it, too, was based on integration. The five-year plan proposed by General de Gaulle on 3 October 1958 was in fact nothing more than another attempt at integration.

26. Not only was the solution proposed by France unacceptable in itself, but the pillars that supported it—the referendum and the elections—were defective. The result of the referendum had been known in advance and its value had been challenged, by Mr. Pierre Mendès-France, a former Prime Minister, and Mr. Gaston Defferre, a former Minister for Overseas France, among others. As for the elections, they had been a complete victory for Algeria and the Algerian Government, since the Algerian people had shown by abstaining that it was resolutely in favour of liberty and independence. The elections had been condemned by all neutral observers, and he read some extracts from L'Express and The New York Times.

27. In view of the danger presented by the war in Algeria and of recent political developments, it was becoming urgently necessary to find a solution to the question of Algeria. Those developments had included the Conference of Independent African States, held at Accra in April 1958, which, he pointed out, had adopted a resolution recognizing the right of the Algerian people to independence and appealing to the friends and allies of France to refrain from helping that country in its military operations in Algeria. Other developments had been the Conference of North African Nationalist Parties, held at Tangier in April 1958, and the tripartite conference between Tunisia, Morocco and the Algerian National Liberation Front, held at Tunis in June 1958. Those events showed that the whole continent of Africa supported the cause of Algeria. Lastly, the most important political development had been the creation of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic. That Government had proclaimed its adherence to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was also prepared to observe the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. He accordingly hoped that the friends and allies of France would convey to that country the will of the international community that France, too, should abide by those provisions.

28. There was only one possible solution to the Algerian problem: independence and sovereignty for the Algerian people, which would permit Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco to form a federation and enable France to have friendly relations with all the Arab States. That solution, which responded to the aspirations of the people of Algeria, was consistent with the letter and the spirit of the Charter and reflected the general desire of the international community. The only alternative was war, which would mean economic and financial bankruptcy for France and victory for the people of Algeria. In addition, it might block the bright prospects which the Saharan oil offered for Europe. That oil belonged to Algeria and could not be disposed of without its consent. Lastly, France's defeat would impair the equilibrium of Europe.

29. However, the way was still open for an honourable peace through negotiations between Algeria and France. France must therefore respond to the offer of negotiation made by the Algerian Government. The United Nations must also take a decision in favour of independence and negotiations which would make it possible to establish just relations between France and Algeria.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.