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MEETING**

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Chairman: Sir Claude COREA (Ceylon).

AGENDA ITEM 71

Question of Algeria (A/ 4418 and Add.1) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) said that the international character of the Algerian question and the competence of the United Nations to deal with it had long been established facts. Although the absence of France from the Committee was to be regretted, it must not shake the determination of the United Nations, as an international organization dedicated to the maintenance of peace and the promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights, to discharge its obligations with respect to Algeria.

2. Reviewing the history of the Algerian question in the United Nations, he said that it had been Saudi Arabia which on 5 January 1955—early in the Algerian war—had drawn the attention of the Security Council to the grave situation created by France's attempt to put down the national uprising in Algeria by force of arms. The Security Council had taken no action. Later in the same month, the efforts of fourteen African and Asian States to have the Algerian question discussed by the General Assembly at its tenth session had been frustrated. In 1956, the Security Council's attention had again on two occasions been drawn by the African and Asian States to the deteriorating situation in Algeria. The Council had refused to consider it. In October 1956, at the request of the same group of States, the question had been placed on the agenda of the General Assembly at its eleventh session. After full debate, the Assembly had unanimously adopted resolution 1012 (XI) expressing the hope that, in a spirit of co-operation, a peaceful, democratic and just solution would be found, through appropriate means, in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter. France had disregarded that resolution and the war in Algeria had continued. Resolution 1184 (XII), which had also been adopted unanimously, had similarly been ignored by France; in that resolution the Assembly, at its twelfth session, had taken note of the offer of good offices made by the King of Morocco and the President of Tunisia and had expressed the wish that "pourparlers" should be entered into by the parties. Finally, France had shown the same attitude with regard to the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.232) submitted by seventeen Powers at

the Assembly's thirteenth session, referring to the right of the Algerian people to independence and to the willingness of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic to enter into negotiations with the French Government, and urging the parties to reach a negotiated settlement of the Algerian conflict.

3. At the fourteenth session, the Assembly had set aside in plenary session a draft resolution (A/C.1/L.246 and Add.1) approved in the First Committee by a majority vote, in favour of a more moderate text (A/L.276) recognizing the right of the Algerian people to self-determination and, with a view to reaching a peaceful solution on the basis of that right and in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, urging the parties concerned to enter into "pourparlers". However, even that mild resolution had not been adopted.

4. The circumstances of its defeat had been revealing and unprecedented. In essence, the draft resolution which the Assembly had been asked to adopt had merely reaffirmed a basic principle of the Charter and restated the policy proclaimed by the President of the French Republic, General de Gaulle, on 16 September 1959. It had not condemned France, nor had it contained any derogatory reference to French policy in Algeria. It should have been adopted by acclamation; indeed, each of its paragraphs, put to the vote separately, had obtained the required two-thirds majority. Yet the resolution as a whole had been rejected. Shortly after the voting, the French delegation had asserted that the resolution had been defeated as a result of strategy and collaboration between France and a group of the friends of France. But it was unjustifiable for a Member State to employ strategy in order to defeat a resolution on a serious international problem. By killing the resolution, the Western Powers, which had argued with one voice throughout the debate, had dealt a severe blow to freedom.

5. The case for Algeria, as presented by the African and Asian delegations to the First Committee at the Assembly's fourteenth session, had been based on President de Gaulle's statement of 16 September 1959, in which he had recognized the right of the people of Algeria to self-determination. Although that statement had contained dangerous loopholes, the Provisional Government of Algeria had welcomed it and had declared itself ready to negotiate with France the conditions and guarantees, including a cease-fire, necessary to enable the Algerians to decide their future status. The Provisional Government had not insisted on immediate independence; it had not pressed for recognition; it had not suggested any particular régime, order or constitution for Algeria. On the contrary, it had accepted President de Gaulle's proposal that the people of Algeria should be offered a free choice between independence, integration with France and association with France, and had declared that it would be bound by the Algerian people's deci-

sion. It had insisted only that that decision should be made under conditions which would ensure that it was entirely free.

6. The case for France, on the other hand, had been presented to the First Committee, in the absence of the French delegation, by the Western Powers. For the past six sessions of the Assembly, France had wavered between denying or acknowledging the competence of the United Nations to deal with the Algerian question. France should be reminded that what President de Gaulle had referred to as the "so-called United Nations" included France, and, moreover, that France was a permanent member of the Security Council. If, as President de Gaulle held, the United Nations had failed in many respects, one of the main reasons for at least some of its failures was France's refusal to comply with its decisions, in particular, on the question of Algeria. France's strategy at the fourteenth session had been deplorable. One after another, the Western Powers which supported France had pleaded with the Assembly to give France time to implement its policy of self-determination, not to antagonize it or to offend its sensibilities, and to refrain from taking any precipitate action which might disturb the balance of the delicate situation created by President de Gaulle's statement of 16 September 1959. In point of fact, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Powers had misled the United Nations into a policy of inaction but for which the year 1960 could have been Algeria's year of peace. Because the United Nations had renounced its responsibility for the maintenance of peace, the war in Algeria had entered its seventh year and continued unabated, taking a heavy toll of human lives and creating serious economic and political difficulties for France. If they were really concerned for the future of France, the friends of France should exert every effort to end that devastating war.

7. While the NATO Powers had advocated a policy of inaction in the United Nations, outside the Organization they had extended every form of assistance to France to enable it to carry on its colonial war in Algeria. Almost all the war material in Algeria, including the equipment of the French units, was of NATO origin. Large numbers of helicopters and fighter planes, together with spare parts, had been supplied by the United States. American military instructors resided in Algeria, and part of the training of French pilots operating in Algeria was carried out under NATO auspices. Moreover, United States Navy units on patrol in the Mediterranean provided France with radar facilities enabling it to stop ships en route for Algeria, in violation of freedom of the seas, and had supplied seaplane and aircraft-carrier support. It had been disclosed that France's bombing of Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef on 8 February 1958 had been carried out with United States aircraft; Mr. Douglas Dillon, a former United States Ambassador in Paris, had stated that the use of United States materiel against Sakiet was hard to excuse, and had admitted that some of the arms used by France against the Algerian people came from military supplies provided by the United States within the framework of NATO. Moreover, the NATO Council had noted that France considered it necessary, in the interest of its own security, to increase French forces in Algeria, which was part of the zone covered by the North Atlantic Treaty. The military expenses of the Algerian hostilities were NATO expenses; they were counted as

part of the French contribution to the "common defence". Indeed, in applying to the United States Government for financial aid, the French had strongly emphasized the financial implications of the war in Algeria. The financial support given to France by NATO provided further confirmation of its major responsibility in the Algerian war.

8. The war in Algeria could be said to be NATO's only achievement, since all its plans for Western military defence and economic co-operation had been a failure. In fact, France regarded NATO primarily as a means of maintaining its position in Algeria, and had repeatedly warned the NATO Powers that continued French rule in Algeria was essential to continued French membership in NATO.

9. NATO members were expected to place their loyalty to that organization above their loyalty to the United Nations; in 1955, after Greece and Iceland had voted for the inclusion of the Algerian question in the agenda of the General Assembly, Mr. Spaak, the Secretary-General of NATO, had in effect rebuked them by stating that NATO members must co-ordinate their foreign policies. The enforcement of that policy on NATO members was a direct threat to the United Nations.

10. Although NATO's professed purpose was the defence of freedom and democracy, the aggressive war which it was waging in Algeria showed that it was actually a champion of colonialism and an enemy of freedom. That was why the Algerian Provisional Government had recently denounced Algeria's inclusion in the area covered by NATO and repudiated all engagements undertaken by France in the name of Algeria, and had warned the NATO Powers that it regarded all participation by NATO or its members in the Algerian war as an act of aggression against the Algerian people.

11. It was not because of any bias that he was introducing the issue of NATO into the Algerian question, but because a peaceful solution of the Algerian war would be impossible so long as NATO gave France its military, political and economic support. Both in Algeria and in the United Nations, the NATO Powers should atone for the past by transferring their support to the Algerian Provisional Government. That would surely be a more honourable course than aiding in a colonial war, for Algeria's struggle for freedom was in the glorious tradition of the American, French and English revolutions. It should be noted that France's leading intellectuals and political thinkers were now openly proclaiming that the Algerian conflict was a war of aggression against the Algerian people and that French soldiers in Algeria who deserted would not be betraying their country; French soldiers had already begun to desert, and some were at present on trial. Thus, France itself was setting an example for the United Nations and NATO to follow. He appealed to the NATO Powers to provide the Algerian people with military and economic assistance, as well as refugee relief, clothing and medicine.

12. The Algerian people had not sought war, but had been forced into it after 130 years of French colonial domination. The Algerian leaders had constantly declared their readiness to negotiate a peaceful settlement on the basis of self-determination, the very principle which General de Gaulle had recognized in his statement of 16 September 1959. Yet the French

Government had rebuffed the Algerian offers on various flimsy pretexts, on one occasion had kidnapped the members of an Algerian peace mission, in an act of aerial piracy, and had rejected offers of good offices by the King of Morocco, the President of Tunisia and other world leaders. Conclusive proof that France did not seek peace, but rather the reconquest of Algeria, had been provided by its reaction to Algerian efforts to bring about negotiations, and by the reception given to the two emissaries sent by the Algerian Provisional Government in June 1960 to Melun, France, to prepare the way for a delegation headed by its Premier, Mr. Ferhat Abbas. The two Algerian emissaries had been treated like prisoners of war, peremptorily informed of the sole conditions under which negotiations could be held, and told that Mr. Abbas would be permitted to speak to no one while in France and would not even see President de Gaulle until a cease-fire had been signed.

13. The grant of full sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity to Algeria was the only possible basis for a solution of the Algerian problem. It was impossible to understand why Algeria must remain the only country in North Africa to be denied independence. As had been pointed out in an editorial in *The New York Times* of 17 November 1960, it made no sense, at a time when fifteen former French African colonies had just been given independence, to deny Algeria the right of self-determination and insist that the Algerian problem was not a matter of international concern and should not be discussed at the United Nations.

14. It had been said that there were vast French interests and a large French minority in Algeria.

15. It was true that French interests existed in Algeria. Every colonial Power had had interests in its dependent territories; but as the example of India had shown, those interests had not been an impediment to independence. In fact, they could only be preserved through the recognition of independence, for if independence was denied the colonial peoples would rise up and destroy them totally.

16. The Algerian Provisional Government had frequently declared its readiness to respect France's legitimate interests in Algeria. It had made it clear that independence would not mean isolation, but would be a prelude to free co-operation with all nations of the world, including France. It was only through negotiations that French interests could be respected and protected; if the war continued, they would meet with the same fate as they had in Indo-China.

17. In considering the question of the European minority in Algeria, it was necessary first to dispel certain misapprehensions. In order to build up a case against independence, France had consistently exaggerated the size and falsified the character of that minority. At times, the minority had been put at 1.5 million; but the true figure was actually only half that size, the most recent official statistics estimating the number of Europeans at 850,000 out of a total population of 10 million. It was curious to note that France counted as French settlers the 150,000 Jews whose families had been in Algeria for 2,000 years, who were participating with the rest of their countrymen in the struggle for Algerian freedom, and who had also been the victims of French discrimination. Moreover, the 850,000 Europeans, far from being

exclusively French, were a mixture of all the Mediterranean nationalities who had come to Algeria at different times. One respected French authority, Raymond Aynard, had estimated that of the total number of Europeans only 21 per cent were of French origin. The fact was that where duties were involved the 850,000 Europeans were considered French, but when rights were at stake they were not.

18. But whatever their origin, the fact remained that the Europeans in question had been born in Algeria, and would thus be able to make a free choice. They would be able to choose Algerian citizenship, in which case they would be entitled to all the rights of Algerian citizens, without discrimination, or they would be able to remain French citizens, and continue to reside in Algeria with freedom to engage in all lawful activities. The Provisional Government of Algeria had repeatedly stated, in official pronouncements, that in an independent Algeria equality would be the rule, and there would be neither discrimination against nor special privileges for anyone. Accordingly, the question of the French minority did not arise. Suffice it to recall the policy statement made by the Provisional Government on 26 September 1958, in which it was stated that Algeria, once freed from colonialism, would not have first-class and second-class citizens, that the Algerian Republic would make no distinctions of race or religion among those who wished to remain Algerians, and that all legitimate interests would be respected. It was hard to see what more could be expected from Algeria in the way of guarantees. The generosity and chivalry of the Algerian Provisional Government's attitude was remarkable, when one considered the expropriations and dispossessions to which the Algerian people had long been subjected. With the granting of independence that sad chapter would be closed for ever; even the French "ultras" gave no cause for apprehension, for they were an insignificant minority, and would be able to hope for no further privileges and distinctions after independence.

19. But if that chapter was to be closed for ever, the United Nations must play its part; it must not be content to stand back and watch the war continue, remaining indifferent to the fate of 10 million people and of peace in the Middle East. Fortunately, in the course of six years of discussion much experience and knowledge had been gained, and the role of the United Nations should therefore be easy to determine. President de Gaulle had now taken a decisive step, and was at present seeking to gain the French people's support for his policy by holding a referendum on the subject of Algeria's future. But the United Nations could only take note of that fact, for the French referendum was France's domestic affair, and should not affect the Assembly's deliberations or influence its decisions. For no matter what the outcome of the referendum was, the right of self-determination of the Algerians could not be challenged. Since, therefore, Algeria's future must ultimately depend on the choice of the Algerians themselves, the United Nations should hold a plebiscite in Algeria to register the freely expressed wishes of its people.

20. A United Nations plebiscite was justified by a number of considerations. In the first place, it was a matter of elementary justice that France, a party to the war in Algeria, should not be allowed to decide Algeria's destiny. Secondly, the entire administration

in Algeria—being a colonial administration—was hostile to the Algerian people and its aspirations. Thirdly, the French army and security forces in Algeria, by dint of official indoctrination, had been imbued with hatred for the very principle of self-determination; moreover, the French Government itself was committed to combating the principle of self-determination, as was plain from the instructions given to the Delegate General in Algeria by Mr. Debré, the Prime Minister of France, who had said that everything possible must be done to ensure that the choice would be against secession and in favour of close union with France.

21. Lastly, it was clear from statements he had made on various occasions that President de Gaulle placed a special interpretation of his own on the principle of self-determination. In his statement of 16 September 1959, he had addressed the Algerians as "individuals", denying the historic fact of Algerian unity and sovereignty. He had warned that the choice of independence would entail poverty, chaos, slaughter and communist dictatorship, whereas federation would carry with it a number of rewards. In a later message to the armed forces in Algeria, President de Gaulle had said that Algerians must be given every moral and material reason for wishing to be united with France. As recently as 4 November 1960, he had stated that France would take the measures necessary to protect, on the one hand, those Algerians who wished to remain French—thereby implying the partition of Algeria—and, on the other hand, France's interests in Algeria. Moreover, he had referred to the Provisional Government of Algeria as "the rebel leaders who had lived outside Algeria for six years" and who were acting as if they had been appointed beforehand, and appointed by him, as the rulers of Algeria. That statement had been less than fair; after all, General de Gaulle himself had been absent from France for a number of years as head of the French liberation movement. Besides, the members of the Provisional Government of Algeria were not seeking to be appointed the rulers of Algeria, and in any case would wish to be chosen as such by their own people and not appointed by President de Gaulle. They were concerned only for the independence of their country, and had conducted the Algerian war for that reason. If they had merely wished to be appointed rulers of Algeria they could have chosen the easier course of becoming quislings, or Vichyites; but they had chosen to be patriots, and like General de Gaulle had striven to emancipate their country from foreign domination. It was true that President de Gaulle had spoken of an Algerian Algeria, but it was evident from his remarks that what he had in mind was a special Algerian Algeria which "would choose to be united with France".

22. In view of all those considerations, how could a plebiscite held under French auspices possibly be

free? The Algerian plebiscite must be held under direct United Nations supervision. If France was sincere, it should have no objection to such a course, while if it harboured designs of its own that was all the more reason for the United Nations to intervene in order to guarantee freedom of choice.

23. In that connexion, he was authorized to state on behalf of the Provisional Government of Algeria that that Government was willing to accept the result of a free plebiscite organized in Algeria by the United Nations.

24. Incidentally, there should be no reason for France to oppose a United Nations plebiscite in Algeria; the very word "plebiscite" had been borrowed from the French, and there were numerous instances in history of plebiscites, held under international auspices, from which France had benefited. There was even more justification for holding a United Nations plebiscite in Algeria, for that country never had been and never would be French. Even after 130 years of francization, Algeria had remained an Arab country, and would always remain an Arab country and an integral part of the African continent.

25. It would be recalled that in his statement of 16 September 1959, President de Gaulle himself had said that he would invite representatives of information media from all over the world to witness the plebiscite. Why, then, should the plebiscite not be conducted by the United Nations? If newspaper reporters were to be accepted as observers, there should be no reason not to accept the Secretary-General, who had the confidence not only of France and the Algerian Provisional Government, but of all Members of the United Nations.

26. Lastly, he cited statements that had been made in 1957 by a great Western leader, Senator John F. Kennedy, now President Elect of the United States, in condemnation of the record of the United States on the question of Algeria and in support of Algerian independence. He hoped that the Western Powers would now at last support the independence of Algeria; it was to the Western Powers that such an appeal must be addressed for as Mr. Kennedy had said, it was they who were impeding the freedom and independence of Algeria. No such appeal need be made to the Soviet bloc, for ever since the problem had come before the United Nations, it had supported the cause of Algeria without reservation. Such support could only be deserving of praise. It was unfortunate that the Western Powers should be on the side of colonialism, since they claimed to represent the free world. Now, they were faced with a clear-cut choice between independence or imperialism; it could only be hoped that they would make a choice worthy of the United Nations, and of the cause of peace and human dignity.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.