

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THIRTEENTH SESSION

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

AGENDA ITEM 63

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

1. U THANT (Burma) emphasized the tremendous loss to France in men, money and materials resulting from the war in Algeria. The enormous expansion of French forces in Algeria since the first year of the rebellion was a clear indication of the mounting gravity of the situation.

2. In allowing the war to continue, France was motivated by both economic and political considerations. However, he thought that French hopes of economic gains in Algeria were largely illusory, particularly so long as the nationalist movement continued to be denied recognition. The prospects of the profitable exploitation of the riches of the Sahara in the near future were diminished by the fact that years would be needed to build pipelines from the Sahara oil fields and, even if France could be assured an output of 40 million tons of oil a year by the end of the next decade, the value of that oil would amount to only one-fifth of the annual investment called for under the plan for Algerian prosperity proposed by General de Gaulle, Prime Minister of France. Moreover, if Algeria won its independence during that period—and the Algerian independence movement was gaining momentum—France ran the risk of being deprived of its original investment and of any future profits if a free Algeria proved hostile to it. Fortunately, a growing number of French businessmen were recognizing the inevitable need for an agreement with the nationalists in order to ensure future economic co-operation with a friendly and independent Algeria. The political stumbling-block in a solution of the Algerian question was the official French thesis that Algeria was French and all Algerians were Frenchmen. That fiction had long been a canker of French policy in North Africa. Although France had brought to its colonies a spirit of equality and an anti-racist attitude which were all to its credit, it had not always succeeded in imposing that spirit on its colonists, who had often been guided by an outmoded power complex.

3. The war in Algeria was primarily a political problem, and attempts to deal solely with its military aspect were doomed to failure. Its cessation depended on the solution of all outstanding problems involving the French Government and the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic. The French Govern-

ment's invitation of 23 October 1958 to the Provisional Government to come to France "to settle the end of hostilities" was simply a proposal for the unconditional surrender of the Algerian nationalists who had taken up arms against the French. In that connexion, he drew a comparison with the situation in post-war Burma when the Burmese Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League had been pitted against the United Kingdom Government on the issue of independence. The British had agreed to negotiate with the leaders of the League, with the result that the legitimate aspirations of the Burmese people for independence had been fulfilled. The foresight and magnanimity of the United Kingdom Government had erased the traditional bitterness between the United Kingdom and Burma, and ushered in an era of friendly relations between the two countries.

4. France should recognize that the upsurge of national consciousness in Algeria could not be stemmed and that its attempts to do so would have distressing consequences not only for itself, but for the whole of the so-called free world. France appeared to be repeating the mistakes it had made in Viet-Nam, and he appealed to the French Government not to blind itself to the realities in Algeria as it had done in Indo-China. Any policy other than political reconciliation between France and North African nationalism would estrange many of France's allies, and recognition in some form of Algerian nationalism and Algerian aspirations for independence was an essential starting point for negotiations. General de Gaulle had the power and prestige required to make that new start; the liberal ideas he had expressed concerning a North African federation could alter the situation drastically; Burma hoped that he would be able to overcome resistance to his efforts at negotiation.

5. The peoples of Asia and Africa continued to adhere to the principles established at the African-Asian Conference, held at Bandung in 1955, and to support the right of the peoples of Algeria to self-determination and independence. They could not accept the view that Algerian affairs were essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of France; indeed, the General Assembly had clearly decided that it was competent to discuss the question and had expressed hope for a peaceful solution in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

6. The Algerian issue was complicated by the fact that the one million or more Frenchmen who had been in Algeria for almost four generations could not be abandoned by France. Some means had to be found to enable them to coexist in peace and confidence with the eight million Arab Moslems in the country and to take full account of their legitimate rights. The situation called for negotiations with a view to reaching a solution in conformity with the Charter.

7. Mr. FILALI (Morocco) deplored the refusal of the French delegation to participate in the debate on the

question of Algeria, especially since, although it continued to maintain that the General Assembly was not competent to consider the question under Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter, it had participated in the debate on Algeria at two previous sessions. Its procedural argument was fallacious and outworn. Indeed, if, as the French delegation asserted, its record in Algeria was unassailable and it wished to refute the slander which had been directed against France, it had nothing to fear from the debate. The fact that the Assembly had discussed the question at two previous sessions and adopted two resolutions on it (resolutions 1012 (XI), 1184 (XII)) conclusively proved that it was competent to deal with it. Its debate was all the more justified as the situation in Algeria since the twelfth session had further deteriorated.

8. Recalling the terms of General Assembly resolution 1184 (XII), he pointed out that the offer of good offices made by the President of the Republic of Tunisia and the King of Morocco in the hope that it could open the way to a definitive settlement of the Algerian conflict had been accepted by the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), but rejected by the French Government. Since then, and particularly during the past ten months, a veritable military dictatorship was being set up in Algeria, accompanied by intensified repression and a widening of hostilities. Reports by the French authorities of a steady weakening of the adversary contrasted strikingly with calls for new military contingents and the increasing number of military engagements and casualties. The French Army, which had reluctantly accepted the independence of Indo-China, Morocco and Tunisia, still adhered to outdated imperialist concepts and considered the Algerian conflict to be its last hope for revenge. Consequently, not only was it proceeding with the war on a vast scale, but it was using every means of pressure—such as concentration camps, torture, the destruction of whole villages, and the displacement of hundreds of people, who were being herded into refugee camps—in order to terrorize the Algerian people. Those methods of so-called pacification were wrong and contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Charter; the United Nations should strongly condemn them; they would not prevent the Algerian people from continuing its struggle for a universally recognized principle, one which had already been fully implemented in similar cases.

9. The Algerian struggle for liberation was only one concrete manifestation of a general process of "decolonization" and General de Gaulle himself had recognized its meaning when on 4 June 1958 he had paid a tribute to the courage of the fighting Algerians on his first visit to Algiers. It was paradoxical for France to refuse to the Algerian people what it seemed to be generously offering to other French African territories, namely, self-determination under the control of France. Moreover, Algeria was not a formless colony, but a nation fighting for its future.

10. The war in Algeria was impeding the final settlement of the problems between France and Morocco, in particular, the total and unconditional evacuation of the French Army. The daily incidents which occurred on the borders of Algeria created serious tensions in the relations between France and the countries of North Africa. The French Army, repeating its exploits at Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef and the Libyan village of Yassin,

had recently attacked the village of Touzine on Moroccan soil and opened fire on a camp of Algerian refugees. Morocco was justifiably concerned lest the huge military potential deployed by France in Algeria might escape from the control of the French leaders and a full-scale North African war threatening world peace and security might break out.

11. Despite the gravity of the situation, the present French Government was continuing the policy of its predecessors and seeking to impose a unilateral solution, based on a thinly disguised restoration of the policy of integration. The referendum of September 1958, held in a war-ridden country under the control and with the active participation of 800,000 soldiers, could not be regarded as a serious consultation of the Algerian people. The fact that the legislative elections had been organized before the restoration of peace in Algeria could only mean that General de Gaulle wanted to minimize the importance of the Algerian struggle. He had obviously not been burdened by the policy worked out by the Socialist government of Mr. Guy Mollet: a cease-fire, elections, negotiations. He was proceeding as though the Algerian conflict was no more than a misunderstanding which could be readily resolved. French circles in Algeria had, of course, welcomed his initiatives; the Committees of Public Safety had taken the situation in hand; and the Army had begun a "conditioning" operation.

12. In an attempt to convince the world that the elections in Algeria would be genuinely free, General de Gaulle had published his famous letter to General Salan, delegate-general of the Government, calling for free elections and requesting the Army to avoid all political activities. Implicitly, he was admitting that the referendum had not been free, that it had been the Army's doing. The purpose of the letter was to cause moderate nationalist candidates to stand for election, with whom the French Government would presumably be prepared to work out an Algerian solution. Thus, General de Gaulle had deliberately ignored the real Algerian national movement and attempted to set up an alternate group of spokesmen for the people of Algeria. His attempts had failed because true French democrats had refused to stand, on the grounds that the elementary conditions for a free consultation were lacking, namely, freedom of the Press, of expression and of assembly.

13. The elections in Algeria had been the work of the French Army. Circulars issued by the French Command had called upon the Army to support candidates favouring a French Algeria and integration, and to advise the Moslem population to vote for those put forward by the Committees of Public Safety. A protest against the Army's role in the elections by a Socialist leader on the spot had been sent to Mr. Mollet. It had been shown to General de Gaulle, but had remained unheeded. Contrary to the hopes of the French Government, however, the moderate candidates whom General de Gaulle had hoped would come forward had not done so.

14. Neither the referendum nor the elections constituted an adequate solution to the Algerian problem; both totally ignored the fundamental problem and were prejudicial to a final settlement. The fact that General de Gaulle had never pronounced the word "integration" was not sufficient to dispel doubt: he had never renounced the fiction that Algeria was an integral part of France and that Algerians were full-fledged French-

men who were to be rewarded for their sufferings in the war by increased participation in the administration and the public service of the metropolitan country. Mr. Jacques Soustelle, General de Gaulle's Minister of Information, had even more explicitly indicated that present French policy for Algeria was one of integration. According to him, the economy, industry and currency of Algeria would have to be merged with those of metropolitan France and Algeria would have the same status as Brittany or Alsace. That policy ran counter to historical necessities and the permanent hopes of the Algerian people. The Algerians could not be induced to renounce a claim based on their consciousness of belonging to a nation with its own history and traditions. The "brave men's peace" offered by General de Gaulle at his press conference of 23 October 1958 represented a retrogression compared with the proposals of the Mollet government in 1956: it meant nothing less than surrender, for a cease-fire would at least imply that neither side would lay down its arms until the disputed questions had been resolved.

15. The Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had been fully justified in refusing such proposals and in refusing the invitation to meet with "the authority" in Paris to discuss them. It favoured a meeting in a neutral country, all the more as members of the Algerian Government were still being held in prison in France. Thus, having refused to discuss the political future of Algeria with those whom he described as the representatives of an "external organization", General de Gaulle had said that the political situation should be allowed to develop, presumably on the basis of the results of the recent elections. However, it was not even certain that the successful candidates in those elections would be called upon to discuss the matter. All that was certain was General de Gaulle's insistence that Algeria should be closely associated with metropolitan France. In the circumstances, the results of all pourparlers and negotiations were already prejudiced.

16. Nevertheless, the Moroccan delegation believed that the only solution of the Algerian problem was to be found in negotiations with the true representatives of the Algerian people. It was not reasonable to attempt, on the one hand, to arrive at a cease-fire with those actually fighting, and on the other hand, to seek to determine Algeria's future political status with persons who owed their position to elections held under unacceptable conditions. The Algerian question had to be dealt with as a single political problem. Morocco appealed to France to consent to negotiations on that basis with the Algerian Provisional Government. The Provisional Government was prepared at any time to send representatives to discuss with the French Government the political and military conditions for a cease-fire. The United Nations should encourage such negotiations.

17. Mr. SOBOLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that a French army of more than 600,000 was attempting to crush the Algerian people's struggle for self-determination and freedom. A régime of police terror prevailed throughout the country, and tens of thousands of Algerians were held in French goals and concentration camps. Moreover, the war was spreading to the territory of Algeria's neighbours, thus posing a threat to international peace.

18. Although the Algerian war was costing the French

people hundreds of millions of dollars each year, it was being pursued in the interests of a handful of French monopolists, who were eager to exploit the oil and other mineral resources recently discovered in the Sahara. By exerting pressure on France, United States oil companies had won the right to participate, on favourable terms, in the exploitation of those resources. At the same time, the United States-dominated North Atlantic bloc, whose strategic plans called for naval and air bases in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, was giving France military, political and economic aid in prosecuting the Algerian war.

19. He pointed out that the permanent representatives of the twenty-four countries which had submitted the Algerian question for inclusion in the agenda of the present session of the General Assembly had noted in their explanatory memorandum (A/3853) that hostilities in Algeria were continuing unabated and that there had been no progress towards the achievement of the purposes of General Assembly resolution 1184 (XII) of 10 December 1957. The promises of equality and economic progress made by the new de Gaulle Government in France masked a desire to maintain French control of Algeria at all costs; indeed, the new French Constitution prepared the way for the so-called integration plan, which would forcibly incorporate Algeria into France. The referendum on the Constitution had been carried out in Algeria under French Army supervision, to the accompaniment of mass repression; he wondered why 600,000 French soldiers were needed to deal with the 3 per cent of the Algerian electorate which had voted "no" in the referendum. In the subsequent Algerian elections to the French National Assembly, the French Government had maintained its ban on all organizations which favoured Algerian independence and had denied the vote to participants in the Algerian national liberation movement; as a result, the people of Algeria had boycotted the election, and not one Algerian patriot had come forward as a candidate for the National Assembly.

20. General Assembly resolution 1184 (XII) had expressed the wish "that, in a spirit of effective co-operation, pourparlers will be entered into, and other appropriate means utilized, with a view to a solution [of the Algerian question], in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations". In April 1958, the Accra Conference of Independent African States had called upon France to recognize the right of the Algerian people to self-determination and independence, to withdraw its troops from Algeria, and to enter into negotiations with the Algerian National Liberation Front with a view to achieving a just and final solution of the problem. Furthermore, the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria had appealed to France to recognize that the Algerian problem could not be solved by military means. Yet the French Government had rejected all the appeals and continued its policy of military repression.

21. The Soviet Union fully supported the Algerian people's struggle for independence and freedom, and welcomed the establishment of the Algerian Provisional Government. While recognizing the existence of historic bonds between Algeria and France, his delegation favoured the immediate cessation of hostilities in Algeria and the peaceful settlement of the Algerian question; it was the duty of the United Nations to con-

tribute to that end by encouraging negotiations between the French Government and representatives of the Algerian people on the basis of recognition of Algeria's inalienable right to freedom and independence.

22. Mr. KHOURI (Lebanon) said that the General Assembly's previous discussions of the Algerian question had shown beyond doubt that it was a colonial problem, that Algeria had its own geographical and historical identity, which had never been lost, and that it had never in reality been a part of France. In neither of its two resolutions on the question had the United Nations gone beyond expressing the hope that France would find a peaceful, democratic and just solution through negotiations and other appropriate means. Unfortunately, however, France, having asked for the Assembly's confidence at the twelfth session, and having thus encouraged some Members to work for the adoption of a resolution reflecting such confidence, had not heeded the advice of the United Nations, did not utilize the appropriate means recommended in Assembly resolution 1184 (XII) and did not accept the offers of mediation made by Tunisia and Morocco. Instead, it had decided on the referendum in Algeria, which had achieved none of the results hoped for by the French authorities because it had been decided on unilaterally, because it had been conducted in an Algeria militarily occupied by France, and because, unlike the other Overseas Territories, Algeria had not been given an opportunity to express itself on the nature of the relationship it desired with France.

23. The failure of the referendum had been predicted by many leading French figures, among them Mr. Pierre Mendès-France and Mr. Gaston Defferre, and the undemocratic manner in which it had been conducted had been described by a number of correspondents. In those circumstances, the announced results were obviously meaningless. If the French Government wished to determine the will of the Algerian people, it could do so in only one way—through a democratic vote reflecting the free will of the people concerned, as prescribed by the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 637 (VII).

24. In spite of the failure of the referendum to restore calm in Algeria, France had persevered in its policy by offering a "brave men's peace" to the Algerians. The offer had been found unacceptable because it was limited to military matters and, instead of proposing a negotiated solution of the political problem, made capitulation the prerequisite to any further action. In setting those conditions, France had ignored both the letter and the spirit of the United Nations resolutions on the question.

25. Unfortunately, France had chosen not to participate in the Committee's debate on Algeria at the present session, although the United Nations was the place indicated by the Charter and referred to by the Secretary-General as the place for the settlement of international disputes. The people of Algeria had only two alternatives: the United Nations Charter or war. Were France to adopt a constructive attitude it would help the Algerians to choose the Charter. The Algerians had been and still were prepared to meet the French at any time in order to negotiate, as equals, a just and equitable solution. But negotiations should precede the cessation of hostilities and not *vice versa*.

26. The war in Algeria was continuing and increasing in violence and scope. A solution was urgently required.

That solution should satisfy the legitimate national aspirations of the Algerian people as adequately expressed by its Provisional Government, and must be negotiated, not imposed.

27. It was his delegation's hope that France would reconsider its attitude, and that its present Prime Minister would seize the unique opportunity now offered to him to solve the problem in accordance with present realities and the French tradition of liberty, equality and fraternity.

28. Mr. CHAPMAN (Ghana) said that the question of Algeria could not be considered an internal French problem, for by no definition could Algeria be regarded as part of France. France's stubbornness and refusal to face facts had cost it dearly in Indo-China and elsewhere. His delegation therefore hoped that France's absence from the Committee did not mean that it would close the door to the possibility of future United Nations good offices in finding a solution to the problem before it was too late.

29. The problem of Algeria was of immediate and vital concern to every independent State, for the spoliation and national destruction France had inflicted on it might well befall any Member State. A successful effort by the United Nations to solve the Algerian conflict in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations would not only restore the freedom and independence of the Algerian people, but would encourage other nations forcibly deprived of their freedom to hope for the restoration of their independence. It would, moreover, help to allay the fears of smaller nations, create an increased feeling of security throughout the world, and make possible a reduction of the armaments burden which absorbed the resources of many countries.

30. His delegation deplored the absence of France from the Committee. That absence could hardly be regarded as showing respect for the United Nations. As a result, the members of the Committee would have no opportunity for the informal contacts and discussion that would be so useful in such a case. His delegation urged France to return to the Committee and join it in an attempt to reach whatever agreement might be possible.

31. Since the twelfth session of the General Assembly, the question of Algeria had been the subject of a resolution by the Conference of Independent African States, held at Accra in April 1958, in which France had been urged to recognize the right of the people of Algeria to independence, to withdraw all its troops from Algeria and to enter into immediate peaceful negotiations with a view to reaching a final and just settlement. A further significant development had been the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic and the statement issued on its behalf expressing readiness to meet with the representatives of France for negotiations on the Algerian question. It was clear, in view of the conditions in which they had been held, that the recent referendum and elections in Algeria had not and could not have been a free expression of the will of the people of Algeria. History offered many parallels from which France could draw a lesson in dealing with the situation confronting it in Algeria. Many of the free associations of States existing today had once undergone periods of internal conflict which had been solved by granting the component parts of freedom to decide their future relationships with the

other members of those associations. It was not yet too late for France to win a valuable friend in an independent State of Algeria. France's own idea of a French community could, like the British Commonwealth of Nations to which Ghana was proud to belong, be so organized as to make room for nations as sovereign and independent as France itself.

32. In those circumstances, the duty of Member States was clearly to speak out freely, relying on the principles of the Charter to provide a basis for a just solution, and thus to usher in an era of peace, co-operation and prosperity not only for Algeria, but for a new France.

33. Mr. KURKA (Czechoslovakia) said that the hopes placed in General Assembly resolution 1184 (XII) had been disappointed, since hostilities were continuing in Algeria and were even threatening to spread beyond its frontiers. Czechoslovakia supported the Algerian people's struggle for freedom and independence and against French colonial domination. It was the duty of the United Nations to help all oppressed peoples win their freedom.

34. The war waged against the Algerian people by the French ruling circles had claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Algerian patriots and caused vast material destruction. At the same time, the French colonialists were trying to destroy Algeria's national identity by introducing so-called integration plans under which the Algerian people would be regarded as Frenchmen. The average yearly income in Algeria was only one-fourth of that in France, and 84 per cent of the Algerian people were still illiterate. In addition, democratic and patriotic organizations were forbidden to function.

35. The recent establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria was further evidence

of the Algerian people's striving for freedom and independence. However, France had rejected the Provisional Government's proposal that negotiations should be initiated on an equal basis in order to bring about a peaceful solution of the Algerian problem. Continuation of the Algerian war was favoured only by monopolistic circles, not only in France but also in the United States and the other Powers members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which sought to retain control of Algeria for the sake of its natural resources and its value as a site for military bases.

36. The Algerian war represented a constant threat to peace and security throughout North Africa, as had been demonstrated by the French bombing of the Tunisian village of Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef on 8 February 1958. Furthermore, the Western Powers were assisting France in its war in Algeria. Political representatives of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia had denounced that assistance and had condemned the maintenance of foreign armed forces on the territory of the three countries as incompatible with their national sovereignty.

37. The increasingly international character of the Algerian problem underlined the need for United Nations action to promote a peaceful solution. The negative position of the French Government had prevented implementation of the resolutions unanimously adopted at the eleventh and twelfth sessions of the General Assembly, which had called for a peaceful, democratic and just solution of the Algerian problem. The Assembly should therefore take a decision at the present session which would contribute towards ending the war in Algeria and would help the Algerian people to exercise its right to self-determination, independence and statehood.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.