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Chairman: Mr. Franz MATSCH (Austria).

AGENDA ITEM 59

**Question of Algeria (A/4140, A/C.1/L.246 and Add.1)
(continued)**

**GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF THE
DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/C.1/L.246 AND ADD.1)
(continued)**

1. Mr. BUDO (Albania) said that the United Nations should fully appreciate that the agreement reached between France and the Provisional Government of Algeria regarding the application of the principle of self-determination to the solution of the problem represented a very significant step towards a peaceful and democratic settlement. France's recognition of that principle meant that it had abandoned the concept of a French Algeria and adopted the realistic approach long advocated by the Arab States and the majority in the United Nations.

2. The Algerian Provisional Government had quite rightly emphasized that the direct talks which it was prepared to enter into with the French Government should bear upon the conditions for a cease-fire and the conditions necessary to ensure that the Algerians could express their choice in the proposed referendum without pressure of any kind. President de Gaulle himself had stated that, unless that choice was genuinely free, the referendum would not resolve the Algerian problem; indeed, it would aggravate it. The Provisional Government also, and quite naturally, wished to ensure that there would be no territorial partition of Algeria or ethnic regrouping of its population. Its demands were legitimate and its attitude revealed considerable political maturity, moderation and a sincere desire for conciliation.

3. An early start of direct negotiations between the parties was essential. It was the only alternative to the continuation of a sterile war which manifestly could not break the will of a people fighting for its freedom. Since agreement in principle had already been reached on a solution of the conflict, and since a delegation of negotiators had been appointed by the Provisional Government, questions of minor significance should not be permitted to delay negotiations. Moreover, the continuation of the Algerian war would not contribute to the relaxation of tension brought about by recent international developments.

4. Albania had consistently supported the struggle of the Algerian people for freedom from colonial domination. It hoped that France would respond to the good will shown by the Provisional Government and that the United Nations would spare no effort to contribute to a peaceful and democratic solution of the Algerian question in accordance with the principle of self-determination laid down in the Charter.

5. Mr. AMADEO (Argentina), after expressing regret at the absence of the French delegation, reaffirmed his country's view that the Algerian question had long ceased to be a matter of domestic concern and that the United Nations was therefore legally competent to discuss it. The recognition by France of the right of the Algerian people to self-determination and President de Gaulle's assurances that all opinions in Algeria could be expressed freely in the proposed referendum removed the main obstacle to the conflict, and offered a more favourable prospect for its solution than had ever existed previously. Those developments reflected a decisive turning point in French policy towards Algeria, especially when it was recalled that Algeria had been specifically excluded from the territories of the French Community which had been permitted to decide their future status under the referendum of 28 September 1958. Argentina wished to pay a tribute to President de Gaulle for the great moral strength he had shown in conceding the possible separation of Algeria, for many generations regarded as a part of France.

6. Nevertheless, there were many differences between the parties to be settled before the recent agreement in principle could be transformed into a permanent peace. It was therefore imperative that caution should be exercised so as not to aggravate the different points of view and to contribute discreetly and effectively to their reconciliation.

7. The first major difference between the parties related to the question of representation in the negotiations. The Head of the French Government had made a unilateral political declaration regarding Algeria and had expressed willingness to enter into direct talks for the exclusive purpose of discussing the military conditions of a cease-fire; the Provisional Government, on the other hand, considered it essential that the negotiations should deal with the political question of the practical application of the principle of self-determination. It further held that the two parties represented at the negotiating table should be France and the Algerian Provisional Government. Argentina did not entirely agree with either of these views. The Algerian conflict could not be a subject for unilateral political solution; if it were, the United Nations would have no competence to deal with it. Facts demonstrated that Algeria was a separate entity from France and no political solution of the conflict could be reached without the participation of the representatives of the Algerian people. But who were those legitimate representatives? Surely

not the Algerian deputies in the French National Assembly, for they did not represent the rebels. On the other hand, his delegation could not agree that the rebels—i.e., the Algerian Provisional Government, were the only authorized representatives. There were other elements of the Algerian population, namely, the French minority and the pro-French Moslem Algerians who favoured a close association between France and Algeria. The Algerian people did not, moreover, appear to be united behind the rebel banner or to agree unanimously that the rebels should represent them. In the circumstances, even at the stage of preliminary talks with the French Government, all sectors of Algerian opinion should be represented at the conference table. While President de Gaulle's proposals constituted a good practical basis for a solution of the Algerian conflict, the procedures and arrangements for their application, if they were to be legally and morally valid, should be agreed upon at a round-table conference at which all elements of the Algerian population were represented.

8. With regard to the second major difference between the French Government and the Algerian Provisional Government, namely, the relationship between the military and the political negotiations, Argentina supported the rebel view. In a war in which neither side could be the victor, it was logical for the rebels to insist that they should have a part in negotiations designed to bring about a peaceful solution of the war. Moreover, military negotiations and political solutions were indivisible; the final peace should be signed at the same table at which the military armistice was concluded. On the other hand, Argentina doubted the wisdom of the Provisional Government in designating as its spokesman a group of rebel leaders held prisoner by the French. Indeed, the representative of Tunisia had felt compelled to soften the unnecessary challenge which that gesture represented by noting (1067th meeting) that the composition of the negotiating group was not final.

9. In the view of the Argentine delegation, an agreement between the principal parties was feasible. They were both working in good faith towards a successful outcome of the negotiations. The representative of Lebanon had enumerated (1070th meeting) some of the procedural matters with which they might deal: the alternatives to be offered in the referendum; the maintenance of the territorial integrity of Algeria; relations between an independent Algeria and France; guarantees of freedom to campaign in the election and to vote without constraint. Argentina was confident that all those matters could be settled at a round-table conference at which all shades of Algerian opinion were properly represented.

10. The Argentine delegation further considered that discussion of the Algerian question by the United Nations could not prejudice the start of direct negotiations or the outcome of such talks. By discussing the question frankly and calmly, the United Nations was rendering a service to the parties. Moreover, Argentina did not believe that a United Nations resolution on the question would necessarily be harmful; if it was not offensive to either side or in any way partisan, and if it merely made constructive suggestions, it could prove helpful. Indeed, it would have been pointless for the Assembly to include the item of Algeria in its agenda if it was not to adopt a resolution on it.

11. With regard to the general subject of relations between the European countries and those emerging into independence, Argentina continued to hold that colonialism had ceased to be a normal form of relationship between the West and the other peoples of the world. It should be replaced by a system of equal treatment based on the sovereign equality of all States and on the final eradication of the resentments generated by all forms of foreign domination. Argentina supported the newly independent peoples' right to participate in the international community; they should be prompted by the desire to work constructively for understanding among the various races and cultures and not to embitter the international atmosphere by a resurrection of past grievances. France and Algeria, for example, regardless of the outcome of their conflict, would inevitably have to work together in close association.

12. The draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.1/L.246 and Add.1) was a distinct improvement over the proposal on the question submitted at the thirteenth session (A/C.1/L.232). It carefully avoided reference to the Provisional Government of Algeria and to the right of the Algerian people "to independence". The Argentine delegation would find it wholly acceptable if the word "two" before the word "parties" were eliminated from the text. Its objection was motivated by the view that the leaders of the rebellion were not the only ones entitled to speak for the Algerian people. If no amendment to delete the word "two" was submitted, Argentina would request a separate vote on it. If the word was deleted, it would vote for the draft resolution as a whole; if not, it would abstain. Its abstention should not then be construed as a repudiation of the principle of self-determination affirmed in the draft resolution. Argentina hoped that the French Government would continue to adhere to the basic policy of allowing the people of Algeria to decide their future through free consultation.

13. Mr. VENKATARAMAN (India) said that the General Assembly could now approach the problem of Algeria with greater hope of finding a just solution in view of the recent pronouncements of the Government of France and the Provisional Government of Algeria concerning the application of the principle of self-determination. The fact that the African-Asian Conference, held at Bandung in 1955, had declared its unanimous support of that right of the Algerian people was evidence of the widely-felt desire of the international community to find a just and satisfactory solution to the problem. Although discussions of the problem at successive sessions of the General Assembly had not resulted in a solution, it would be incorrect to state, as had the French Minister of Foreign Affairs (814th plenary meeting), that the intervention of the United Nations had, far from contributing a solution, had the opposite effect. The Indian delegation was convinced that past discussions had helped in bringing the issue before the world. Moreover, appreciation was due to the King of Morocco and the President of the Republic of Tunisia, who had offered their good offices in helping to find a solution to the problem of Algeria.

14. India had always stressed the need to recognize the national movement that was sweeping Algeria and the feelings of the Algerian people, which could not be suppressed by force. It had reiterated that no Member State could afford to ignore the lessons

of history and disregard recent experience whereby many countries had gained independence and taken their rightful place in the international community. India continued to feel that the establishment of national liberty was the concern of all peoples of the world. The Prime Minister of India, Mr. Nehru, had expressed the hope that France would acknowledge and accept the demand of the Algerian people for their freedom and end the war in Algeria.

15. The absence of the French delegation from the discussions was a matter of considerable regret since France could have been of help in finding a solution to the problem. As one of the permanent members of the Security Council, France had a responsibility for maintaining international peace, and its presence would have provided the confidence and moral strength which were so necessary at the present juncture.

16. The Indian delegation wished to place on record its appreciation of the action of the Government of France in accepting the principles of self-determination as a basis for a solution to the Algerian problem. As Mr. Nehru had said, President de Gaulle's latest offer was certainly a marked advance on previous suggestions from the French Government.

17. Nevertheless a number of questions needed further clarification and examination. For instance, the French offer was confined to only twelve Algerian departments and left out the two departments of the Sahara; the four-year period suggested before the referendum would seem to be too long, and the provision for French ratification of the Algerian choice gave rise to doubts and misgivings. However, the Indian delegation raised those points, not because it considered that the General Assembly should enter into such details, but in order to emphasize the need for further discussions and negotiations between the Government of France and the Algerian representatives. It was therefore encouraging to note the conciliatory attitude of the Algerian Provisional Government, which had expressed its willingness to enter into "pourparlers" with the French Government to discuss the political and military conditions of the cease-fire and the conditions and guarantees for the application of self-determination.

18. It would be indeed surprising if—as was reported—the Government of France should hesitate to negotiate with the representatives named by the Algerian Provisional Government merely because they happened to be in detention in France and not fighting in Algeria. The persons in question were well-known leaders of the liberation movement who possessed the confidence of the people. It was significant to recall that similar situations had arisen during India's own fight for independence. However, not only had the British authorities been prepared to negotiate with the imprisoned leaders, but they had also been prepared to release them unconditionally in order to enable them to conduct the discussions in liberty. That liberal spirit had met with a ready response among the nationalist leaders. Attention had been drawn to that aspect of the situation by sections of the international Press, which favoured discussions with the Algerian leaders in prison. In any case, it would be somewhat unrealistic for one party to a negotiation to choose the representatives for the other side. He hoped that the matter would be settled satisfactorily.

19. The urgency of the need to negotiate was rendered even greater by the fact that a great deal of hardship and misery was being caused in Algeria that could be prevented. In connexion with the Algerian war, his delegation wished to reiterate its view that the treatment of prisoners should be in strict conformity with the Geneva conventions.

20. The Indian delegation believed that the draft resolution, of which it was a sponsor, reflected the general view of the members of the Committee. While it would be generally agreed that no steps should be taken in the United Nations that would endanger the chances of a meeting of the parties at an early date to discuss the conditions necessary for a solution of the problem, India could not share the view that no resolution should be adopted. It was convinced that the present draft resolution contained nothing to which either the French or the Algerians could take exception. The paragraphs of the preamble included a tribute to the generosity and far-sightedness of the French Government and the sense of responsibility and realism displayed by the Provisional Government of Algeria, while the operative paragraph expressed the generally held view that discussions should begin as early as possible. Many of the paragraphs of the preamble were mere statements of fact or identical to paragraphs which had been adopted in previous years. It was hard to find anything in the draft resolution which could discourage either party from proceeding with discussions, and no mention had been made of the details of the French offer or of the views expressed concerning the conditions laid down. To maintain that no resolution should be adopted or that the sympathy and support of the United Nations should not be expressed would be to accept the argument that the subject was beyond the jurisdiction of the United Nations. The Indian delegation sincerely trusted that the French Government would accept the objectives underlying the draft resolution in the spirit in which they were offered, namely, the desire to achieve a peaceful, democratic and just solution of the problem.

21. Mr. PALAMS (Greece) observed that the war in Algeria, which had continued unabated for many years, had been followed with growing concern by the United Nations ever since the General Assembly's tenth session, in 1955.

22. The war was being waged in the interest of the Algerian people as a whole with the purpose of restoring that people's freedom to determine its own future. The attitude of the Greek delegation had throughout been determined by its adherence to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its conviction that, in political matters, solutions could only be negotiated and not imposed. While it was true that certain political, juridical and economic aspects of the problem made Algeria a special case, Greece had always believed that ultimately the problem could be solved only by the Algerian people itself, along democratic lines. National liberation movements, while drawing their momentum from the spirit exemplified by the United Nations, were also inspired by the concept of democracy, which was primarily of Mediterranean origin. It was thus easy to understand that the Algerian struggle was not in the nature of an anti-French campaign but was intended solely to enable the Algerian people to control its own destinies.

23. The positive solution that had so long been sought was on the way to being achieved now that France had recognized the right of the Algerian people to self-determination. France had undertaken to allow the Algerians to exercise a free choice, by means of a referendum, between three alternatives. That undertaking was fully valid from the international point of view. It was reassuring that the Algerian leaders had expressed agreement with the substance of President de Gaulle's proposals. Undoubtedly, the French authorities in Algeria and their opponents would have to submit to the wish of the Algerians as neither side had any intention of imposing its will by force. It might therefore be wondered why hostilities had not yet ceased in Algeria or, at least, why discussions between France and the Algerian leaders had not yet been initiated. It had been said that the Algerian leaders were hesitant to enter into negotiations on account of the mistrust engendered by long years of war and that they needed guarantees which they wanted to discuss with the French Government.

24. However, it had been established that once peace was restored, those guarantees and conditions of application would be determined by agreement with the representatives of all parties and sections of Algerian opinion. The Algerian combatants would thus have an equal right to participate in negotiations and express their views. Surely it was unnecessary, therefore, to enter into such details at the present stage and to risk losing sight of the broad outlines of the policy stated by General de Gaulle who sincerely desired to settle the Algerian problem definitely and fairly. When negotiations were entered into, the Algerian leaders would regain their confidence and the present obstacles would vanish. Once peace was restored, democracy would be able to function smoothly.

25. The decisions taken by General de Gaulle were a great contribution to the cause of freedom in Algeria and to world peace. On the other hand, Greece had always appreciated the contribution to world peace that could be made by the constructive forces of Arab nationalism. Algeria would surely prove no exception.

26. As for the question of adopting a resolution, the Greek delegation felt that there was a need to achieve unanimity on a formula which might express the general wish that peace and freedom should be promptly restored in Algeria and which would set an example of co-operation and concord to those most directly concerned.

27. Mr. HOLLAI (Hungary) said that the main issue before the Committee was whether the General Assembly would help to bring about a cease-fire in Algeria and initiate negotiations between the two parties concerned on all aspects of the Algerian question. The prospects for a just solution of the problem had improved; as a result of the steadfast struggle carried on by the Algerian people and the Algerian Provisional Government with the support of progressive forces throughout the world and the champions of Algerian freedom in the United Nations, President de Gaulle had recognized Algeria's right to self-determination. If the French President's statement was followed by deeds, France could make a contribution to the relaxation of international tension.

28. Those who sought to prevent the ending of the Algerian war bore a heavy responsibility at a time when negotiations on world-wide disarmament were in prospect. His delegation was convinced that the Algerian question could be settled by negotiations. It was urgently necessary to grant self-determination to the Algerian people, which eagerly aspired to independence, and thus remove a conflict that was poisoning the entire international atmosphere.

29. Those delegations which questioned the wisdom of a General Assembly debate on the Algerian question or cautioned against adopting a resolution on the matter were the ones which in past years had voted against resolutions recognizing the Algerian people's right to self-determination; they were continuing to support a colonialist policy in Algeria. Since negotiations were not yet under way on any of the issues involved, they could not be jeopardized by debate in the General Assembly; in his delegation's view, the debate would help to bring about negotiations.

30. His delegation did not wish to question France's sincerity in offering Algeria self-determination; time would soon show what France's intentions were. He noted, however, that France was not present in the Committee.

31. His delegation wished to see the Algerian war ended as quickly as possible and would continue to support the Algerian people's right to self-determination and independence.

32. Mr. Mongi SLIM (Tunisia) noted that reference had been made to the fact that on 13 December 1958 he had pointed out in the First Committee (1022nd meeting) that the draft resolution then under discussion (A/C.1/L.232), while it had recognized the Algerian people's right to independence, had not specified when or in what manner that right should be exercised; he wished to recall that he had stated at the time that in his delegation's view those matters could be settled only by direct negotiations between the Algerian Provisional Government and the French Government—an idea which had been embodied in the draft resolution.

33. He did not agree that, because France had now fixed a time limit for the exercise of Algeria's right to self-determination through a popular referendum, the problem had been solved; in his statement of 16 September, President de Gaulle had not specified an exact date and had merely said that the referendum would be carried out freely and without hindrance. While no one questioned the sincerity of the French Chief of State, the methods employed in organizing past Algerian elections had created understandable distrust among the Algerian people. He recalled that, at the time of the Algerian communal elections in 1958, President de Gaulle himself had thought it necessary to remind the Delegate General of the French Government in Algeria of the necessity for conducting absolutely free elections. On 2 December 1959, moreover, a French military leader in Algeria had declared that the French Army would remain in that country as long as necessary and would assist in every possible way those who wanted Algeria to be French. In the belief that Algerian distrust could be dispelled only through "pourparlers" between the two parties concerned, his delegation had joined with twenty-one other dele-

gations in submitting a draft resolution urging that such "pourparlers" should be entered into with a view to determining the conditions necessary for the implementation of the Algerian people's right to self-determination, including conditions for a ceasefire. He cited as a precedent the resolution on the Tunisian question adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 1954 (resolution 813 (IX)), when negotiations between France and Tunisia had already been under way, which had unquestionably helped to bring about agreement. The twenty-two-Power draft resolution did not touch upon the substance of the problem, which would be settled by referendum.

34. No useful purpose was served by discussing the question of whether or not the National Liberation

Front (FLN) represented the aspirations of the Algerian people; that would be decided by the referendum. At present, the point was to find a partner with whom France could negotiate on a final solution of the Algerian dispute. The FLN was the other party in that dispute and had been referred to as such by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs; the absence of any mention of that fact in the twenty-two-Power draft resolution was intended to avoid giving offence to anyone or creating any difficulties. He emphasized that the proposed "pourparlers" would determine, not Algeria's final status, but merely the conditions required to ensure that the popular referendum was completely free and genuine.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.