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MEETING**

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Chairman: Mr. Franz MATSCH (Austria).

**AGENDA ITEM 59**

**Question of Algeria (A/4140) (continued)**

**GENERAL DEBATE (continued)**

1. Sir Pierson DIXON (United Kingdom) said that the complexity and importance of the Algerian question reflected the development of historical processes peculiar to the times, and that a solution required great acts of statesmanship which would create a satisfactory relationship between the Arab peoples, whose culture had formed the basis of North African civilization, and the French, who had developed the area for more than a century. There were reasons for confidence that statesmanship equal to that task would not be lacking.

2. The United Kingdom continued to adhere to the view it had expressed in past debates on Algeria, namely, to doubt whether it was politically wise or juridically permissible for the question to be raised in the United Nations or for the General Assembly to adopt a recommendation on the substance of the problem. The United Nations could not hope to contribute to a satisfactory outcome unless it recognized that a hasty word on its part or a proposal out of place might jeopardize the recent favourable trend of events.

3. As the Tunisian representative, Mr. Slim, had stated (1067th meeting), new prospects had appeared for a restoration of peace in Algeria by means of a democratic solution in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter; indeed, the declaration by the President of France, General de Gaulle, on 16 September 1959 recognizing the principle of self-determination had been a milestone in the development of relations between France and the peoples of North Africa. Moreover, the President of France had expressly stated on 10 November that the Algerians would themselves decide their future, that their choice would be free because France desired a definitive settlement of the question, and that all Algerians, wherever they were and whatever their political affiliations, would be enabled to take part in the referendum without constraint and to participate, not only in the voting, but in the prior discussions on arrangements for the voting and regulations governing it, and in the campaign which would precede the referendum. The Algerians had surely taken careful note of that statement.

4. Mr. Slim had also reminded the Committee that both parties to the fighting were now agreed in principle that a cease-fire should be concluded and that the Algerian people should be allowed to determine its political future in peace and security. President de Gaulle had declared on 10 November that the French Government was prepared to discuss the conditions for a cease-fire and the guarantees to be offered to the Algerian participants in such discussions; the Algerian nationalist leaders seemed receptive to the French proposal. With the prospects for agreement so bright, it was the responsibility of the United Nations to avoid any action that might delay a settlement. The General Assembly should refrain from adopting any resolution on the substance of the question lest by seeking to apply some specific formula to future negotiations it should set up new pressures which merely served to retard agreement. The successful outcome of the negotiations on Cyprus, coupled with the Assembly's avoidance at its thirteenth session of any pronouncement on the substance of that question, suggested that, when those directly concerned showed a desire to reach agreement, the most effective course was to leave the matter in their hands.

5. Mr. FAWZI (United Arab Republic) said that, while the General Assembly should take no action that would prejudice the achievement of a just peace in Algeria, it should try to make a positive contribution to a solution of the problem; he did not agree with the view apparently held by the United Kingdom representative that the Assembly should remain passive. The questions of Trieste, Cyprus, the Suez Canal and so on were examples of seemingly insoluble questions which had eventually been solved. It was also to be noted that twelve new republics had been established within the French Community within the past year and that Guinea had been recognized by France as a sovereign State.

6. With regard to Algerian representation in any future negotiations, history offered many examples of national leaders who had come from prison or exile to take their place at the negotiating table. It was for the Algerian Provisional Government alone to choose its representatives; the five delegates whom it had named were by no means out of the fight, even though their inexcusable detention by the French Government prevented them from playing an active military role. The issue of representation should not be permitted to divert the Committee from its efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement.

7. It was encouraging that both the French and the Algerians had announced their readiness to discuss a cease-fire and to work for a final settlement. France had recognized the Algerian's right to self-determination in full freedom and with suitable guarantees, while the Algerian Provisional Government, in spite of the far-reaching reservations in President de Gaulle's proposal of 16 September, had in its state-

ment of 28 September declared its willingness to enter into "pourparlers" with the French Government in order to discuss the conditions and guarantees for application of the principle of self-determination. The Provisional Government had refrained from raising the question of the numerous statements by leading French figures indicating that self-determination would not be fully applied and that the task of applying it would rest with the French Army and administration in Algeria.

8. The Algerian Provisional Government held that there could be no cease-fire without an agreement providing guarantees that the principle of self-determination would be genuinely applied. President de Gaulle should be quick to acknowledge the obvious fact that only a defeated enemy could be expected to accept an unconditional cease-fire; encouragement might be found, in that connexion, in his assertion of 16 September that the time could be foreseen when the people of Algeria would be able to decide freely, once and for all, on their destiny.

9. The General Assembly should urge the French and the Algerians to start discussions forthwith with a view to achieving a definitive settlement and a cease-fire with adequate guarantees that would ensure the Algerians full freedom to exercise their right to self-determination without undue delay. The Assembly would thereby give its endorsement to the positions taken by the Algerian Provisional Government and the French Government.

10. His Government would continue to support the Algerians in their struggle to regain their freedom and redeem their rights.

11. Mr. DE LEQUERICA (Spain) expressed gratification concerning the recent developments in the Algerian question and, in particular, the offer made to the Algerians to decide their political future by the application of the principle of self-determination. Although the most well-intentioned Frenchmen might have regarded the debate on the Algerian question in the United Nations as hampering a solution, the fact was that the Organization had contributed to the excellent result now achieved. It had done so by remaining within its limitations. Spain had consistently held that Algeria was juridically an integral part of France and could not, under Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter, be the subject of consideration or decision by the United Nations. The Organization had a distinct role to play in applying its basic principles to the establishment of good relations between nations, but it should not usurp functions which would cause it to create antagonism between States. Fortunately, the United Nations had respected its limitations and had stood aside in the dispute over Algeria. It could be sure that France, although absent from the Committee's deliberations and although continuing to reserve its position under Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter, would take note of the statements of principle and suggestions made in the debate; indeed, France had not obstructed a discussion of the question.

12. France had recognized that the nationalist movement in Algeria was the genuine expression of the desire of the North African masses to establish a new form of political organization. It had, throughout the long struggle, made appropriate political moves to deal with that development. It was justifiably proud of

its achievements in Algeria, for as a result of its labours, living standards had risen, great cities had been built and the culture of the Algerian people had flowered. France had transformed Algeria and created a French-Algerian reality, and that reality could not be discounted by the assertion that Algeria was Africa and consequently not a part of France. Indeed, there were profound affinities between the countries of southern Europe, including Spain, and those of North Africa. Although France was entitled to be proud of its achievements in Algeria, and to defend them, it did not seek to deny the aspirations of the Algerians to make their own contribution to Mediterranean civilization and to affirm their personality, and had consequently offered on 23 October 1958 a "peace of the brave".

13. That offer, and President de Gaulle's solemn proclamation, endorsed by the French Parliament, of the right of the Algerians to self-determination were most gratifying. The term "self-determination" was open to many interpretations: if taken out of context and applied arbitrarily at the wrong moment, self-determination might create disorder; but if applied at the appropriate historical moment, as was the case in Algeria, it was the only method of resolving conflict. By agreeing on that principle, France had taken a wise political step. A careful examination of President de Gaulle's statement at his press conference of 10 November showed that the Algerians were being assured of full freedom, not only in the exercise of their vote, but also in participation in the discussions regarding arrangements for the elections, while the leaders of the nationalist movement had been invited to discuss a cease-fire with the French Government wherever and whenever they wished to do so, with an assurance of proper guarantees for their return, and of honourable treatment which would respect the valour they had shown under arms. Thus, France was offering Algeria an unprecedented opportunity for friendly reconciliation and its initiative had been applauded by such eminent persons as the President of the United States and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, and by the press organ of the Holy See. There were obviously many difficulties to be overcome before a cease-fire could be agreed upon and a referendum properly carried out. The problem was extremely complex and it was regrettable that certain speakers, in particular the representative of Saudi Arabia, who, in his statement at the 1068th meeting, had accused France of insincerity and bias, had failed to appreciate that complexity. Surely it was natural for France, as a party directly concerned with the future of Algeria, to emphasize what it regarded as the most desirable and vital solution in terms of its own future. With good will on the part of Algeria's neighbours and of the two parties, the remaining difficulties could certainly be surmounted.

14. As a Mediterranean country, Spain was particularly concerned that peace should be restored in North Africa and that the area should be strengthened as a bulwark against aggression. It was concerned also because a substantial number of people of Spanish origin in Algeria were continuing to make a valuable contribution to the economic and spiritual development of that country. Lastly, Spain was concerned with a peaceful future in Algeria because an Africa disorganized and threatened by communism would be a calamity. He was not implying that the nationalist

movement in Algeria was a communist movement or that peoples seeking national independence should be arbitrarily branded as communist. He was merely recognizing that in their ardour they might be tempted to accept the aid of those whose purposes were subversive rather than patriotic. The support of the peoples of the West for the Algerian nationalists was the best guarantee against that danger. Spain had carefully distinguished between legitimate nationalist movements and subversive elements and had supported the aspirations of many of the African peoples now represented in the United Nations. It sought to preserve in North Africa a vigilance against subversion and a recognition of justice. A satisfactory solution in Algeria would contribute to that objective.

15. If such a solution was to be achieved, the two parties must demonstrate good will and proceed with caution, while the United Nations must refrain from measures outside its limited jurisdiction lest it prolong the conflict and widen the gap between the parties. In all matters falling within the exclusive competence of sovereign States and particularly in the matter of a separatist movement authentic in origin but promoted from outside, the United Nations should guard against any improper extension of its authority. It should not add to procedural difficulties which could more easily be resolved by the parties themselves. It should bear in mind the precedent of Cyprus and avoid becoming emotionally involved in the Algerian problem in its present stage.

16. Mr. PLIMSOLL (Australia) observed that the debate had shown that there was a considerable measure of agreement on what lay at the root of the Algerian problem; that was to say, there was general recognition of the Algerian people's right to self-determination and of the need to give them the proper opportunity to exercise that right. The Australian Government had welcomed the opportunities recently opened up by General de Gaulle in his courageous and imaginative statement for settling the long-standing problem on terms that might be generally acceptable.

17. The question really confronting the First Committee now was the role it could usefully play at the present stage of the situation. In his view, the Committee could play a twofold role by affording representatives an opportunity to expound during the debate the issues and interests involved, and to state the questions which would at some subsequent stage require elucidation. For example, the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Republic had just outlined to the Committee some very important questions which still needed answers. However, while it was useful to have views expressed and questions stated in the Committee, it would not be opportune for the Committee to try to crystallize the answers to those questions in the form of a resolution. In both international and private negotiations, when attempts were being made to bring parties together, there was often a danger of jeopardizing chances of agreement by attempting to be too precise too soon. Thus, in drafting a resolution it would be difficult to achieve a formula that would ensure that the viewpoint of all interested parties was accurately reflected and that no one would feel his position was being prejudiced for the next step. At such a critical stage, great caution should be exercised for fear of doing something that would not only be unhelpful but might actually hinder a settlement.

18. The Committee should think back to the situation before General de Gaulle had made his announcement. The situation had changed enormously. In taking that step forward, General de Gaulle had shown a degree of imagination, courage and generosity which should be matched by the General Assembly. According to the course it chose the United Nations could either facilitate the further steps that needed to be taken or render them impossible. Certainly it could not match France's approach simply by adopting a resolution, for a resolution might not even be helpful, particularly if it proved unacceptable to France, as one of the major interested parties. At the present stage a resolution could not solve the Algerian question but it might easily prevent any solution by driving the parties apart instead of bringing them together. A practical result should be sought, and the place to seek it at the present time was the actual scene of developments in North Africa and in Paris. The Assembly, in addition to hearing the various views and the questions put forward, should try to foster the propitious atmosphere that was developing. It should also ensure that sufficient time was allowed for a satisfactory solution. He hoped that in that way it would soon be possible to achieve a lasting settlement of the Algerian question which would preserve the interests of all concerned and recognize, as General de Gaulle had promised, the right of self-determination of the Algerian people.

19. Mr. LODGE (United States of America) welcomed the spirit of conciliation that had been shown in the discussion of the Algerian question because such a spirit was indispensable to an early solution of the problem. The United States favoured any just and democratic solution and hoped that the aspirations of the Algerian people would be achieved by peaceful means. Clearly no solution would be possible without good faith and restraint by all concerned.

20. Certain points in General de Gaulle's statement of 16 September deserved special attention. First, it was clear that France intended to solve the problem by permitting the Algerian people a free choice as to their future. The United States welcomed the specific recognition of the application to Algeria of the principle of self-determination. As President Eisenhower had stated on 17 September, General de Gaulle's far-reaching declaration was completely in accord with United States' hopes to see a just and liberal programme for Algeria. The French proposals had evoked an encouraging response which denoted awareness that a significant new commitment had been made furnishing a basis for concrete discussions.

21. The United States Secretary of State had on 22 September expressed the hope that no action would be taken in the United Nations that would prejudice the realization of a just and peaceful solution for Algeria. The United States delegation therefore hoped that the members of the Committee would avoid a resolution that might prejudice a solution of the Algerian problem. The present debate would have an effect on those principally concerned, to whom it would be apparent that the sense of the debate was that they should make early use of every appropriate means of achieving a solution.

22. It was to be hoped that those considerations would be weighed carefully before proposals were introduced and pressed to a vote. Injudicious action by the Assembly might result in the introduction of

extraneous factors which could endanger the chances of direct negotiations. The utmost caution was warranted. In the belief that those principally concerned should be allowed to seek direct solutions unhampered,

the United States delegation advocated moderation, restraint and patience in the discussions.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.