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MEETING**

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

AGENDA ITEM 63

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

1. Mr. MEZINCESCU (Romania) reviewed the debates which the General Assembly had devoted to the Algerian question without any result.

2. Some speakers had suggested that the action taken by the United Nations had reduced the chances of arriving at a peaceful solution of the conflict. That argument, however, seemed groundless. The resolutions adopted thus far had been extremely moderate, and had also been supported by representatives of Governments opposed to any United Nations decision on the Algerian question. What had happened, though, was that, by avoiding any clear statement that the Algerian people were entitled to freedom and independence, the Assembly had encouraged the French colonialist circles.

3. It was true that the duty of the United Nations was often to persuade the parties to a conflict to seek jointly a peaceful solution of their problems. In the case of Algeria, however, the two parties were unequal in material strength, and the party having at its disposal the greater power wished to choose its opponent's representatives itself. Yet if representatives designated by the French colonialists could commit the Algerian people, its struggle would have been stifled before it could be brought to the attention of the United Nations. In reality, the Algerian people considered itself the master of its own destiny; it did not want to have its country classified, against its will, as an integral part of another territory and it was determined that the principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be carried out, namely the equality of the rights of peoples and the right of peoples to self-determination.

4. The General Assembly would have to take all those factors into account when reaching a decision in the matter. In particular, it would have to indicate clearly who were the two parties who must negotiate a solution of the conflict.

5. At the twelfth session, certain delegations, such as that of the United States, had invoked measures introduced unilaterally by the French Government as a reason for advocating lukewarm recommendations. The course of events had shown that their argument

had been unfounded: the *loi-cadre* (basic law) had been buried ingloriously and the colonial war was continuing, even if the old illusions had been superseded by new ones. In that connexion, no illusions should be entertained, as far as Algeria was concerned, about the value of the referendum held in September 1958 and of the recent elections.

6. It was unfortunate that Algeria, unlike Guinea, had not had the chance to accede to independence peacefully. The reason for the difference was undoubtedly that Algeria's subsoil contained substantial hidden reserves of oil. The data given on that subject by *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*^{1/} were most significant.

7. The General Assembly should therefore, without further delay, state clearly and categorically that it recognized the Algerian people's right to freedom and independence.

8. Mr. DE LEQUERICA (Spain) said that the Spanish delegation's position on the Algerian question had remained constant: it was based on Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter, which stipulated formally that nothing contained in the Charter authorized the United Nations to intervene in matters which were essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State. It was not the mission of the United Nations to encourage rebellion in any country or to praise violence against lawful authority.

9. Article 15 of the Covenant of the League of Nations had stated that, if a dispute arose out of a matter solely within the domestic jurisdiction of one party, the Council should so report, but should make no recommendation as to its settlement. The Dumbarton Oaks Proposals had recognized the same principle. The Charter of the United Nations used the word "essentially" rather than "solely", as if wishing to show that, even when dealing with questions which might have certain international aspects, the United Nations should be guided, in determining the true nature of a dispute, by the substance of the problem; it thus emphasized respect for the sovereignty of States.

10. The Algerian question could not be regarded as a threat to the peace. The fact that the metropolitan area and an officially designated province of France were separated by a sea could in no way alter the juridical position. Some countries were archipelagos, others had island provinces. Nor should it be forgotten that Algeria had formed part of the French Republic at the time of France's entry into the United Nations.

11. The Spanish delegation was not qualified to judge the wisdom of the French decision at the current session not to participate in the debate on the question of

^{1/} *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Bristol, Keesing's Publications Ltd.), vol. XI (1957-1958), p. 16153 A.

Algeria. The statements of various French representatives at earlier sessions had provided some clarification of the question, and the Spanish delegation, while following the current debate closely, took those statements into account.

12. The population of Algeria included approximately one million Frenchmen, who could be credited with remarkable achievements in all fields. There was also a substantial Algerian community, with its own traditions, which had expressed the wish to attain independence or, at least, a greater degree of freedom. Nor did Spain forget the vast Spanish contribution to the creation of Algeria. Approximately one-third of the European population of Algeria consisted of inhabitants of Spanish origin, who today were excellent French citizens while retaining the qualities of the country of origin.

13. Freedom was not in itself enough to make a people live; but without some formula for self-government it was impossible to give a people a feeling of satisfaction and of unity on essential matters, and without that feeling material progress could be only an illusion. In Europe, as in Africa, there were many examples of political entities which contained a number of different communities, together forming a greater unit imbued with a spirit of national pride and of common patriotism. It was thus not impossible to create an entity of that kind in Algeria.

14. At the twelfth session, the United Nations had unanimously expressed the wish that pourparlers should be entered into between the parties concerned, in a spirit of effective co-operation, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. The war, however, had continued. Acts of extreme violence had been committed on Algerian territory. But war had not been the only reply to the United Nations appeal. There had also been something far greater: a genuine peaceful revolution in the French conscience, a new French Constitution, something almost approaching a change in the country's régime that had been largely due to the Algerian problem. The problem had been approached in a new way, and bold attempts had been made to find a settlement.

15. One of the complaints of the Moslem community in Algeria was that it had not benefited from the social advantages enjoyed by the population of French origin and that there was no equality between the two communities except when it came to bearing arms in France's defence. Since the twelfth session, however, the French Government had announced an eight-year plan calling for the construction of new schools, for the allocation of one-tenth of the administrative posts to Algerian Moslems, for the advancement of agrarian reform and for the opening of a new phase in Algeria's industrialization.

16. In political affairs, even if certain criticisms of the recent popular consultation in Algeria were valid, there had been one occurrence of the utmost importance: for the first time, French Algerians and Moslem Algerians had gone together to the polls. That fact constituted the first step in the right direction. The fact that all shades of political opinion had not been represented deprived the popular consultation of some of its value, but the results obtained were nevertheless encouraging.

17. In France, public opinion was undergoing a very clear process of development. Ranged against the tendencies which opposed any proper settlement of the Algerian question stood a great personality, whose authority, foresight, and disinterested and dispassionate decisions justified a hope for the return of harmony.

18. On 23 October 1958, the head of the French Government had offered to the combatants a "brave men's peace" and had invited the leaders of the revolution to come to France to discuss the cessation of hostilities. He had declared, in particular, that Algerian policy had to be defined in Algeria itself and that future solutions would be based on Algeria's personality and its close association with metropolitan France. Although the spokesmen of the Algerian independence movement had not accepted the French proposal, they seemed prepared to negotiate without insisting on a prior recognition of Algeria's independence.

19. There was thus no justification for saying that all hope should be abandoned. The decision most consistent with the spirit of the United Nations would be a resolution encouraging calm discussion and honest negotiation.

20. At the 1016th meeting, the representative of Argentina had said that the task of the United Nations was not to bring about transfers of sovereignty, but to ensure that the political and social changes in the world took place without endangering international peace. That statement was correct, but it presupposed a foreknowledge of the development and duration of historical processes. In reality, processes which appeared both obvious and automatic often lasted a very long time before they were completed, and frequently involved catastrophes. He had in mind, for example, Europe in the nineteenth century, when statesmen had neglected great opportunities. Any moral intervention by the United Nations thus had to be confined within certain limits; such intervention should bear only on well-defined points where agreement was possible, and the United Nations should not go too much out of its way to define the final aims and solutions.

21. It was impossible for a people such as the French to ignore the deep feelings of the Algerian people and not to take into account the evolution of a society striving to attain its full personality. Since the 1958 referendum, all the African lands under French administration had witnessed the beginnings of a new political, administrative and economic structure. A new community of peoples was being born, aspiring to a destiny similar to that of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

22. In 1957, at the eleventh session, Mr. Soustelle, the French representative, had stated in the First Committee (835th meeting) that France had not destroyed a State in Algeria since a State had never existed there, but that France had made great efforts to facilitate the harmonious development of all the Algerian peoples. He had added that France could not be blamed for having based its conduct in 1830 on the international law then prevailing. At the twelfth session, he (Mr. de Lequerica) had intended to say that it was easier to defend France's juridical title in Algeria by relying on the principles of Polignac, the Minister of Charles X in 1830, than by invoking the principles defended by the representative of France, Mr. Pineau. Much of the present dispute stemmed from that very fact, for it was manifest that the world had greatly

developed since the French Revolution and its Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. Today, those great principles had been learned by the peoples of Africa and Asia, and they, in their turn, were invoking the rights of man for themselves.

23. Moreover, North Africa should not be permitted to imperil the secure coexistence of the free world. In Algeria, the guarantee of that security had to come from the Algerians and the French. The Arab peoples would be disappointed if they expected consistent and constant conduct from the Soviet Union, which had for forty years displayed consummate mastery in the difficult art of changing its attitude towards the various international conflicts according to its own interests.

24. Mr. Ali SASTROAMIDJOJO (Indonesia) called for an end of colonial domination in Africa. The dignity of the human person had to be respected and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations had to be applied to all peoples.

25. The reason for France's decision not to take part in the present debate was doubtless the fact that, after its failure to comply with General Assembly resolutions 1012 (XI) and 1184 (XII), such participation would have been difficult. The idea of integration was baseless, for the Algerian people had its own culture and traditions and constituted a national entity. The truth was that Algeria was under a domination incompatible with the liberty and dignity of which General de Gaulle had spoken in a recent statement. The policy of force was also incompatible with General de Gaulle's idea of the greatness and mission of France. Contrary to the view expressed by the Argentine representative at the 1016th meeting, he thought that the cultural contributions of the colonial Powers did not excuse colonialism, for, in reality, culture could spread only where there was freedom. Only when it had recovered its independence would the Algerian people be able to appreciate French culture.

26. Despite the hope engendered by General de Gaulle's accession to power, France continued to pursue in Algeria a policy of domination. The referendum and the elections held in Algeria had been only a new manifestation of that policy, since they had taken place under the control of the army and were thus valueless. Despite the results of the referendum and the elections, the Algerian people earnestly aspired to independence. Moreover, the Liberation Army could not have developed as it had done thus far without the sympathy and co-operation of the Algerian population. General de Gaulle's call to that revolutionary army to surrender had thus been foredoomed.

27. On the other hand, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had on several occasions declared its readiness to enter into negotiations with France in order to determine the political and military conditions of a cease-fire. Such negotiations should obviously take place on neutral territory and have in view the general political settlement of the Algerian question, as had happened in the case of Indonesia. The pseudo-elections which had recently taken place in Algeria only complicated the problem of negotiations.

28. The United Nations should therefore act in the spirit of the Conference of Independent African States, held at Accra in April 1958, and urge the two parties to enter into negotiations in order that the Algerian

question might be solved in conformity with the Charter. He hoped that his delegation would not be accused of oversimplifying the issue. But the complexities of the problem must not be permitted to obscure the central question, the different aspects of which could be considered in detail only in the course of negotiations.

29. Mr. ABDOH (Iran) recalled the valuable contributions which the French delegation had made to the debate on Algeria at the twelfth session, even though it had voiced reservations regarding the competence of the United Nations. He believed that, when the General Assembly decided to include an item in its agenda, all Member States should take part in the discussion. By adopting resolutions on the question of Algeria, the Assembly had already affirmed its competence. Moreover, the international character of the Algerian problem could not be denied, in view of the weight of the armed forces involved, the scope of the hostilities and their repercussions on the neighbouring States.

30. A study of the history of Algeria showed that the question was one of restoring a former state of affairs rather than of establishing a new one, Algeria having constituted a distinct entity over a period of centuries. The Algerians were thus undoubtedly entitled to self-determination. All the attempts made over the past 130 years to assimilate the Algerian nation into metropolitan France had manifestly failed. There were admittedly over a million Frenchmen living in Algeria and their interests should be protected. Their presence, however, was surely but an assurance that a solid link would always be maintained between France and an independent Algeria.

31. Conscious of the complexity of the problem, the Iranian delegation favoured negotiations between the two parties concerned. That point of view, which it had always defended, was reflected in General Assembly resolution 1184 (XII). The "effective co-operation" advocated by that text excluded any unilateral solution. Furthermore, the solution envisaged therein should be the result of pourparlers or other appropriate means and should be in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter, which included the right of self-determination.

32. A glimmer of hope had appeared when France had offered to its overseas territories the possibility of choosing independence and when on 3 October 1958 General de Gaulle had referred to the "personality" of Algeria. A further reason for optimism had been the declaration by the National Liberation Front of its readiness to begin negotiations with the French Government.

33. Those hopes had been dashed. The outcome of the Algerian elections, which had confirmed France's extremist attitude, had opened the eyes of all those who had believed that a solution could be reached through the internal machinery of France itself. Genuine negotiations could be entered into only with the true representatives of the Algerian people. And it was clear that the representatives qualified to speak on behalf of the Algerian people were those who, during the past four years, had carried the burden of a full-scale war against one of the largest and best-equipped armies in the world, for they could never have been able to organize such resistance without the total support of the bulk of the population. There was no sense in discussing political arrangements with a second party when the

cease-fire depended on a third party. That was particularly true when the title of the designated second party had been questioned, even in neutral countries.

34. For all those reasons, his delegation would support any draft resolution favouring negotiations between the true parties concerned, with a view to a solution in accordance with the principle of self-determination and the right of all peoples to liberty and independence.

35. In the meantime, since the war showed no sign of abating, the two parties might perhaps be requested to take appropriate steps to apply the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Furthermore, the activities of the International Red Cross in Algeria should be encouraged. A recommendation along those lines would be particularly apt at a time when the United Nations was celebrating the tenth anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

36. Mr. PAZHWAK (Afghanistan) said that, in deciding to consider the Algerian question, the United Nations had already shown that it was concerned with the matter and that it had undertaken to find a peaceful solution.

37. After recalling the principal features of the statement which the Afghan delegation had made in the Assembly during the general debate (755th plenary

meeting), he said that the absence of the French delegation could easily be interpreted as a denial of the principle of peaceful negotiation.

38. One of the main obstacles impeding the solution of the problem was the fact that the General Assembly's previous resolutions had not been carried into effect. The Assembly should therefore consider the question even more seriously than before. Having regard to the great number of victims of the Algerian war and to the dangers which that war represented to international peace and security, urgent action should be taken to put an end to that situation. That need had already been pointed out by the countries that had taken part in the African-Asian Conference, held at Bandung in 1955, when they had declared their unanimous support of the right of the Algerian people to self-determination and independence.

39. The Afghan delegation hoped that the General Assembly would urge the parties concerned to reach a peaceful solution of the problem through negotiations and would also take into account the importance of the restoration of normal and friendly relations between France and Algeria. The willingness of the Algerians to enter into negotiations was encouraging, and his delegation would therefore support any recommendation of the Assembly which would make such negotiations possible.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.