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

AGENDA ITEM 63

Question of Algeria (A/3653) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. TARABANOV (Bulgaria), recalling that the policy of his country was one of peaceful co-operation with all States and of respect for the principle of self-determination, deplored the failure of France to put an end to the colonial war in Algeria and to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the Algerian people. All the steps taken by successive French governments since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1012 (XI) had been designed solely to preserve the interests and privileges of the French colonialists. Meanwhile, the war against the Algerian patriots was continuing and, according to the French Press, official French Army communiqués—which reflected only part of the truth—said that the casualty lists were mounting. Moreover, it was a well-known fact that in colonial wars even the most elementary rules of warfare were not observed. The Algerian war was jeopardizing the peace not only of North Africa, but of the whole world, and the United Nations was fully justified in dealing with the Algerian question. The attempts of colonial interests to prove that it was an internal affair of France were futile; the tensions created between France and other nations, and between France and the States bordering Algeria, indicated the gravity of this international problem.

2. All endeavours to reach a solution of the Algerian question based on the fiction that Algeria was part of France had failed because the Algerian people would never accept that fiction and would continue to oppose any settlement foisted upon it in disregard of its determination to decide its own future. In the circumstances, French governments and the colonial interests which they supported would inevitably have to resort to force and widen the conflict. By following that policy, France had been trapped into an inescapable war: the Algerian people, united by the idea of national independence, could never be conquered.

3. The problem of Algeria could not be solved by military action; what it needed was a political solution, and the proposal for integration, for which some found support in the results of the referendum of September and the legislative elections of November 1958, was not the answer. It was clear that both the so-called "consultations of the Algerian people" had been organized principally by the French Army and had not been conducted in an entirely honest and regular manner. The large number of abstentions—they amounted to 40 per cent of the voters in the Algiers district—must be interpreted as a rejection of integration. The results of the referendum and of the elections could not be construed as the expression of the will of the Algerian people, and the persons elected could not be deemed to be their representatives.

4. The Algerian Liberation Army had been called upon to cease fire, at the very time when the struggle of the Algerian people was gaining momentum, but it could not respond to that appeal without betraying the interests of the Algerian people; a cease-fire now would be tantamount to the surrender of the whole movement of national liberation.

5. The attempt to divert attention from the political problem in Algeria or to defer a solution for the time being by concentrating on the economic questions affecting the country would also fail. No valid economic change could be made so long as Algeria was a battle-ground; economic improvement could only take place in conditions of political freedom and full national independence. France could make a substantial contribution to Algeria's economic and social progress, provided that the Algerian people were free and freely decided to accept French co-operation in the common interest.

6. It was still time to reach a peaceful solution of the Algerian problem through negotiations, provided Algeria's right to independence was recognized. The negotiations should take place with the true representatives of Algeria, the leaders of its struggle for national independence. Thus, the negotiations would be in the interests of the people of Algeria, of France, of the United Nations and of world peace. Bulgaria supported any proposal to that end.

7. Mr. DINK (Ethiopia) regretted the refusal of the French delegation to take part in the debate and urged it to resume its vital contribution to the Committee's work on the Algerian question and to make its voice heard in support of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

8. Ethiopia's position on the Algerian question was expressed in the declaration of the Conference of Independent African States, held at Accra in April 1958, upholding the right of the Algerian people to self-determination and independence, and reaffirming the undertaking of the participant States to hasten the realization of that right. For its part, Ethiopia had sought to rally support for those views through diplomatic activity and special diplomatic missions, often in collaboration with similar efforts by other African States. It recognized that there was growing, if sometimes hesitant, progress by the colonial Powers in meeting the aspirations of the colonial peoples, and it therefore urged more persistent efforts to establish
co-operation between France and Algeria towards that end.

9. Prince Aly KHAN (Pakistan) said that the Algerian question was a difficult one for his country because, while Pakistan was linked with the Algerian people by the closest ties of brotherhood, it had for many years maintained a warm friendship with France.

10. It was regrettable that the French delegation had decided not to take part in the Committee's debate, for, as France was the sovereign Power in Algeria, no peaceful settlement of the conflict there was possible without its co-operation. His delegation hoped that the French Government would take note of the views expressed in the Committee in the spirit of good will in which they had been offered.

11. Since the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 1184 (XII) little basic change had taken place in the Algerian situation, except for the proclamation on 19 September 1958 of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, which stood ready to negotiate with the representatives of France for a peaceful solution of the question. The Algerian conflict, however, was in motion within France events of the most far-reaching significance. France had once again given proof of its greatness. It had exchanged weakness, confusion and division for strength, clarity and unity, and had overnight transformed its colonial empire into a voluntary association of autonomous communities. Unfortunately, Algeria had not been included among the French territories permitted to choose between continued association with France and secession from the French Union. It had had to remain a department of metropolitan France.

12. It was not clear whether the plans for Algeria announced by General de Gaulle, Prime Minister of France, amounted to a programme of integration or one which provided scope for a degree of self-expression of the Algerian personality. General de Gaulle had defined the problem as one of giving each Algerian liberty, well-being and dignity. But it was clear that integration had been rejected by the de facto leaders of Algeria and that Algerian nationalism could no longer be eradicated by a policy limited to social justice for the Moslem population.

13. Whatever the right solution to the problem, it was clear that it must be based on the consent and free will of the Algerian people. The heart of the problem was therefore the question of how the popular will of Algeria was to be ascertained. France rejected the claim of the National Liberation Front, which, after the recently formed Provisional Government to speak in Algeria's name. On the other hand, in view of the circumstances in which the referendum of September 1956 had been held, it could not be validly claimed that it proved the desire of the Algerian people for integration with France. Nor had the elections of November produced Algerian deputies capable of discussing a political settlement and persuading the people of Algeria to accept it.

14. The problem could not, however, be shelved on that account, nor would the French Government be acting realistically if it were to divert its efforts from the search for a political solution to schemes of economic advancement, however well intended. There was no reason to believe that the Algerian people would be willing to abandon its national aspirations for the sake of a higher standard of living. Nor could his delegation agree that the political status quo in Algeria should be maintained until the five-year economic programme announced on 3 October 1958 had been carried out, in the hope that the personality of Algeria would then emerge more clearly and a political solution appear of itself. The United Nations could not accept such a thesis, which implied the indefinite continuation of the tragic conflict in Algeria, because to do so would be to abdicate its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations, imperil the peace and security of the Western Mediterranean and expose the continent of Africa to hostile penetration.

15. His delegation believed that the time was more than ripe for a renewed effort to solve the problem. The leaders of fighting Algeria had offered to negotiate both the military and political conditions of a cease-fire. That offer did not require France to extend prior recognition to the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic or to accept independence as the basis of negotiations on the future of Algeria. Negotiations or pourparlers could well proceed on a practical basis without excessive preoccupation with legal technicalities. Such negotiations should be undertaken without delay.

16. The soldiers of North Africa had fought on many battlefields side by side with the soldiers of France. The friends of France might well appeal to both sides to transform their great tradition of comradeship in war into a comradeship in peace so that the peoples of the Maghreb might be linked with France in a new interdependence based on free consent.

17. But interdependence could be meaningful only if common problems were jointly approached, and since the future of Algeria also involved the future of Morocco and Tunisia, the enlightened statesmen of those two countries were in a unique position to help to promote a peaceful and just solution. Consequently, any resolution submitted to the Committee should be so drafted as not to exclude or prejudice utilization at the appropriate time of the good offices of the King of Morocco and the President of Tunisia.

18. The political evolution of the people of Africa was taking place at breath-taking speed. It was in that context that the Algerian problem and the movement for a North African confederation must be approached if the nations and peoples seeking to solve the Algerian problem were to move forward in true brotherhood.

19. Mr. KISELEV (Eynelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that General Assembly resolution 1184 (XII), calling for negotiations to settle the Algerian question in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, had remained without effect. The French Army was continuing to wage a colonial war in Algeria and was committing atrocities of every kind against the Algerian people. Yet the 800,000 French troops stationed in the country were unable to break the resistance of the Algerians.

20. The Powers members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), particularly the United States and West Germany, were giving France military and economic assistance in suppressing the Algerian national liberation movement. Western military circles regarded Algeria as part of NATO's zone of operations, while the French, British, United States and West German monopolists were eager to exploit the vast oil resources recently discovered in the Sahara.
21. The French ruling circles contended that their colonial war against the Algerian people was purely an internal French matter. They had staged a spurious referendum on the new French Constitution and elections to the French Parliament in Algeria amid a campaign of pressure and violence against the Algerian people. However, their manoeuvres could deceive no one, and the Algerian people had demonstrated that it would not lay down its arms until it had thrown off French colonial rule and won national independence. After more than a century of French exploitation, the Algerian population remained 86 per cent illiterate, the Arabic mother tongue was treated as a foreign language, and the population was living in misery and starvation.

22. A feeling of solidarity with the Algerian people continued to grow, as was evidenced by the demand made by the African-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Conference, held in December 1957, for recognition of Algerian independence. The Algerian war was not serving the national interests of France; it was undermining that country's economic position, creating turmoil in its internal political affairs, and lowering its prestige abroad. A solution of the problem was possible only if the French Government halted hostilities in Algeria and entered into negotiations with representatives of the Algerian people on the basis of recognition of Algeria's right to independence. The peaceful settlement of the Moroccan and Tunisian questions provided a precedent for such negotiations, which should take into account the historical links between France and Algeria.

23. The people of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic welcomed the recent establishment of the Algerian Provisional Government.

24. Mr. O'BRIEN (Ireland) said that the continuing war in Algeria represented a tragedy not only for Algeria, but also for France, where it had produced a grave political crisis. France would emerge from that crisis if French statesmanship proved able to achieve a just and lasting peace in Algeria. However, peace could be secured only on the basis of the freely expressed will of the Algerian people; on the other hand, that will could not be determined so long as the fighting continued. In order to break the vicious circle, France must negotiate with the leaders of the Algerian national movement for the cessation of hostilities and the holding of free elections; it was admitted impossible to say how representative that movement of the Algerian Moslem population was, but the support it had received from the Arab representatives at the United Nations and its ability to wage war against the French Army for the past four years were surely significant. The ultimate decision on Algeria's future must be negotiated with representatives chosen in free elections and in peaceful conditions by the Algerian Moslem population. In the meantime, France should open peace talks with the nationalist leaders on the basis of recognition of Algeria's right to independence. If Algeria should subsequently decide to maintain some sort of link with France, it would be free to do so.

25. His delegation was prepared to support a resolution envisaging negotiations based on the recognition of Algeria's right to independence.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.