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Chairman: Sir Claude COREA (Ceylon).

AGENDA ITEM 71

Question of Algeria (A/4418 and Add.1, A/C.1/L.265 and Add.1-2) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) expressed keen regret that the General Assembly, owing to the position adopted by the Western Powers, had been unable to help in bringing to an end the colonial war which had been raging in Algeria for six years and had cost thousands of lives. No one ventured any more to affirm that the Algerian question was a French internal matter: everyone knew that in Algeria France was flagrantly transgressing the principle, written into the Charter of the United Nations, of the self-determination of peoples, thereby creating a situation which threatened international peace and security. By cynically invoking the so-called "right of pursuit", the French militarists were running the risk of spreading the fire beyond the Algerian frontiers, and particularly into Tunisia and Morocco. The carnage was a monstrous anachronism at a time when it was the duty of mankind to strengthen peace and ensure the freedom and independence of all colonial peoples.

2. In those circumstances, the United Nations could not remain indifferent to the fate of the Algerian people. The peoples of the world expected from it a decision calculated to ensure a speedy and just settlement of the question, based on the right to self-determination and independence. Effective measures to that end were all the more essential as the French Government was taking no account of existing possibilities for a peaceful settlement through negotiation and was trying, instead, to crush the Algerian people's national liberation movement by force. Not content with attacking the Algerian army, the French were engaging in large-scale punitive operations against the Arab population. Some two million Algerians, including women, old men and children, were in concentration camps known as "regroupment camps". About eight hundred thousand Algerians had lost their lives in the war since 1954.

3. France would never have been able to continue that unworthy colonialist adventure without the political, financial and military support of its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and especially of the United States. The colonialist outlook of NATO found expression in the efforts which France was making to annihilate the National Liberation Front (FLN), efforts which were absorbing the major part of the American assistance received by France under the military alliance. In Algeria, bombers, helicopters and napalm bombs were all "made in USA". Also, North African NATO bases served as "points d'appui" for the French militarist clique, while numerous American advisers and instructors were helping the French air force in the planning of its aggressive flights. U-2 planes were taking aerial photographs of Algeria.

4. The Western Press, especially in the United States, had recently launched a campaign of calumny against the socialist countries which were giving assistance to the Algerian people. The "intrigues" of international communism and "Soviet-Chinese infiltration" in North Africa were castigated, and an attempt was being made to deny the FLN's right to receive aid from the anti-colonialist countries. The Liberian representative, who could not be suspected of communist sympathies, had denounced the attempts to frighten the peoples of Africa by alleging "communist penetration", and had reaffirmed the African countries' right to seek the assistance they needed where they thought fit. The African and Asian countries had long ago discovered that the Westerners resorted to anti-communist slogans whenever a liberation movement threatened to drive out the colonialists. One fact remained: in Algeria, Arabs were being killed with American weapons. The representatives of various African and Asian countries had denounced the role played by NATO and the United States, which could not wash their hands of their responsibilities. The solidarity of the colonial Powers and of Western monopolies, which had an interest in despoiling the dependent peoples, was clearly apparent in the collective action of the Imperialists in Algeria, where they were exploiting the people and pillaging the natural resources, in disregard of the Algerians' undeniable right to ownership of, for instance, their oil and natural gas. The New York Times had written that the Sahara could be a source of wealth not only for France but also for its allies of the "free world".

5. However, the colonialists had not succeeded in breaking the will of the Algerian people, for the age of colonialism was over and the process of liberation was irreversible. French governing circles should bear in mind the lessons of Indo-China, where their efforts had merely resulted in delivering the southern half of the country over to the American imperialists. The plans to crush Algeria had no hope of success, as was proved by similar courses of development in Indonesia, Burma, the United Arab Republic, Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, Guinea, Cuba and other countries. History showed that a guerrilla or "partisan" war
always succeeded if it had the support of the whole population.

6. In a number of areas, the Algerians had set up their own administration; in 1958 they had established the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, which was recognized by many States and unquestionably enjoyed the support of the great majority of the population. Representatives of that Government had had conversations with Mr. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, in New York; and Mr. Ferhat Abbas, the Prime Minister, had in September 1960 visited the USSR, where he had met the leaders of the Soviet Government. Those conversations made it clear that the USSR recognized, de facto, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic. The French authorities themselves had been obliged more than once to make contact with that Government, and political wisdom should have taught them long ago that only through negotiations with it, on a footing of equality, could a peaceful settlement of the question be reached.

7. If the butchery in Algeria was not brought to an end, France's prestige could only decline. Already, Western Germany was profiting from France's difficulties in order to strengthen its own position and penetrate the African territories depending on France. To judge from the statement made by the President of the French Republic, General de Gaulle, on 5 September 1960, the French Government did not intend to comply with any resolution which the Assembly might adopt on Algeria. That attitude could only harm the prestige of France, for colonialism was incompatible with its national greatness.

8. Although the French Government was anxious to maintain its colonial domination in Algeria indefinitely, President de Gaulle had been obliged to manoeuvre, and he had let it be understood that he did not exclude the possibility of negotiations with the Algerian Provisional Government. That manoeuvre, which was an attempt to avoid condemnation of French policy, had been repeated prior to each session of the Assembly: in 1958 it had been the "peace of the brave" and the "Constantine plan"; in 1959 it had been recognition of the principle of self-determination—a diversionary manoeuvre pure and simple, unaccompanied by any concrete measure, and traversed by the French attitude at Meaux; in 1960 it was "the Algeria", another slogan designed to deceive public opinion, since General de Gaulle was making the establishment of such an Algeria dependent on a whole series of preliminary conditions which amounted to unconditional surrender by the FLN. The declaration of 4 November 1960, envisaging the creation of an Algerian Republic, was a manoeuvre aimed at calming public opinion; all that was contemplated, in fact, was the organization of a referendum in the presence of the French Army and colonial administrators, who had distinguished themselves as executors of the Algerian people.

9. All the noise made about that referendum was designed to prevent the United Nations from condemning France and to allow that country to gain time in order to intensify its military operations. It must not be forgotten that France, still hoping for victory by arms, had caused the negotiations with the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic to break down and was imposing a new colonial constitu-

tion on the Algerian people, while at the same time attempting to give the impression that that people had participated in the preparation of such a constitution. In addition, the French colonialists were emulating their Belgian colleagues: a plan for the partition of the country was ready. Yet it was clear that a just and peaceful solution of the problem was possible only if the territory's integrity was safeguarded.

10. In those circumstances, the request made by the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic for the taking, by the United Nations, of decisive measures to enable the Algerian people to express its wishes freely was rightly gaining very wide support. It was important that the United Nations should help the heroic people of Algeria to exercise its right to self-determination; the United Nations would thereby contribute to the re-establishment of peace and to the suppression of the colonial régime. The USSR, because of its very nature as a socialist State, could only support that proposal, in accordance with the principles of the declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples submitted for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifteenth session by the USSR Government.

11. As Mr. Khrushchev had stated at Moscow on 20 October 1960, the Soviet people had the keenest sympathy for the Algerian patriots who were endeavouring to shake off the colonial yoke. That attitude was fully in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the cornerstone of which was recognition of the right of peoples to self-determination. The Algerian question must be solved in a way which safeguarded that right, as well as the interests of the two communities. That was, moreover, the only means whereby France could maintain its historic links with Algeria and recover its true greatness.

12. In the last few days, the Press had reported that the French Army and police, who were to organize the referendum, had opened fire on thousands of unarmed Algerians whose only crime had been to go onto the streets to express their loyalty to the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic. It was therefore essential that the United Nations should take an immediate decision to enable the Algerians to make their wishes known. The adoption of the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.1/L.265 and Add.1-2) would be fully in keeping with that aim.

13. Mr. ALEMAYEHO (Ethiopia) expressed regret that the French representative was absent and could not hear the views expressed by other delegations. Ethiopia, which had always maintained very friendly relations with France, nevertheless considered that the war in Algeria could be defended neither morally, since no moral code sanctioned the killing of thousands of human beings merely because they wished to exercise their God-given right to freedom, nor politically, since France was trying to assist an irrepressible liberation movement. In addition, the war was harming France itself, for the considerable amount of money spent on the war, or even part of that amount, could have helped to safeguard France's economic and cultural interests in Africa. France was one of the few European countries which, after departing from Africa, would leave something behind them: their language, their culture, and their judicial,
legislative and administrative systems. Despite past subjugation, former colonized peoples, once liberated, might prefer to co-operate with their former colonizers, by reason of their ties with them. But it was necessary that the colonial Power should withdraw in a peaceful manner. That was what France ought to do, rather than continue a war which could have no other effect than to convert friends into enemies.

14. The French Government had claimed that Algeria was part of France and that the Algerian war was a domestic question, of concern neither to other countries nor to the United Nations. But the conditions essential to Algeria forming part of France were lacking. The two countries were located on two different continents, their peoples were not of the same race, and their economic and social systems, histories and traditions, as well as their civilizations and cultures, were totally different. Moreover, there existed between them no agreement prescribing that one of them was a province of the other. The French Government could therefore support its claim only by the greater strength of its armed forces. But that out-of-date principle, characteristic of the colonial era, had been replaced by the accepted principles of territorial integrity, respect for the sovereignty of States, and the right of peoples to self-determination. The colonial Powers might think, wrongly, that it was to their interest to argue for the validity of the old methods of appropriating territories and peoples; but the countries of Africa and Asia, and the other countries still under subjugation, must all categorically oppose such arbitrary methods. So long as colonialism existed—in whatever form, and under whatever name—the small countries would be unable to ensure their own security. That was why the cause of Algeria was the cause of all small weak countries, and Ethiopia, as one of them, therefore unreservedly supported the right of the Algerian people to full freedom and the maintenance of its territorial integrity.

15. The French position was now very different from what it had been before, and was even much more in line with the Algerian demands than it had been a year ago. France had recognized the right of the Algerian people to self-determination; and General de Gaulle, speaking on 10 December 1960 of an "Algerian Algeria", had said that Algeria was not a province of France. The major obstacle to the solution of the problem had therefore been removed, and the remaining questions, however important, were by comparison only secondary. With regard to the organization and supervision of the referendum, the two parties concerned should abstain from any interference and the task should be entrusted to an impartial body like the United Nations. By accepting such an arrangement, France would prove that it sincerely desired a referendum free of coercion and intimidation. It was admittedly inconsistent for the French Government to admit that Algeria was not part of France and at the same time to say that the referendum on Algeria's future should be held both in France and in Algeria; it was also illogical to recognize the right of the Algerian people freely to determine its future and, at the same time, to subject such free expression to supervision by the French Army. But such inconsistencies were not those of France alone; they were inherent in the nature of colonialism. In any case, since the question of the authority supervising the referendum was of secondary importance in comparison with the other major questions which had already been solved, it would be futile to continue the terrible war that was raging in Algeria. His delegation therefore appealed to France to agree to United Nations supervision of the referendum.

16. Certain representatives had thought that operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.1/1/L.265 and Add.1-2), of which Ethiopia was a sponsor, was too strong, and had expressed doubts as to whether the General Assembly was competent, or even to recommend, that a referendum should be held in any country at all. But since the French Government had recognized that Algeria was no longer an integral part of France and that the Algerian people had the right to determine its own future by means of a referendum, it would seem logical that the General Assembly should at the current session adopt a resolution more concrete and specific than those of previous years, when the situation in Algeria had been confused. Moreover, both the French Government and the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had accepted the idea of a free referendum. The General Assembly would therefore not be exceeding its powers by adopting the draft resolution, and its delegation earnestly hoped that the members of the Committee would find it possible to give their full support to that draft.

17. Mr. BISBE (Cuba) said that the Revolutionary Government of Cuba, in accordance with its anti-colonialist policy, supported the cause of Algerian independence, as it had done at the fourteenth session.

18. The question of Algeria had now appeared on the Committee's agenda for the sixth time, because France was delaying Algeria's independence by continuing to invoke Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter. Persisting in its hostility to the adoption of any resolution, France was again absent from the debate on the question. There was no justification for that arrogant attitude. Algeria's destiny was a matter for its people and for its heroic army of liberation, which was prosecuting a just war, the only means whereby it could secure independence.

19. Despite appearances, French policy had not changed. France continued to adhere to the idea of a French Algeria. That was why it continued the war, in which appalling atrocities were being committed.

20. In his statement of 16 September 1959, General de Gaulle had shown an apparent desire for conciliation, by offering three solutions to the Algerian people: independence, integration, or autonomy in association with France. If that offer had been sincere, such a choice would have betokened some progress, with recognition by France, for the first time, of the Algerian people's right to self-determination. But in fact the Algerian people had the choice of only two solutions, because the offer of independence was not genuine. Nevertheless, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had displayed moderation and had accepted the principle of self-determination, in order to resolve the conflict.

21. More than a year had elapsed since General de Gaulle's statement, but the blood of both Algerians and French was still being shed. Following the failure of the Melun conversations, due to the fact that the FLN emissaries had been treated as prisoners, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had
22. At the beginning of the current session, as at the opening of the fourteenth session, General de Gaulle had raised the Algerian question: he had now proposed an Algerian Algeria governed by Algerians. In fact, as a result of General de Gaulle's statement of 4 November 1959, the Algerian people found itself confronting new dangers. Self-determination was to be granted to the Algerians as individuals but not as a people. General de Gaulle had said that the necessary measures must be taken to safeguard those Algerians who wished to remain French. Moreover, France wanted at all costs to retain control of the oil of the Sahara, which belonged to Algeria.

23. If the Algerians accepted the pacification which France laid down as a prerequisite, they would delay their independence. Therefore they could not yield. But that fact in no way justified the atrocities committed against them, which were unprecedented in the annals of war.

24. There was every indication that the final phase was at hand; the French position had become untenable. If the problem was to be solved on the basis of self-determination, it was essential that the right to vote in a plebiscite be guaranteed under absolute guarantees. There could be no question of a plebiscite supervised by the French Army. The only possible solution was a referendum organized and supervised by the United Nations, which France, as a Member of the United Nations and a permanent member of the Security Council, must accept.

25. As in previous years, France was absent from the debate; but again in 1960 its NATO allies wanted no decision taken which might interfere with General de Gaulle's plans. That attitude, however, was illogical. The Algerians could not expect a solution of the problem from General de Gaulle. The anti-colonialist countries could not admit that the fate of Algeria depended on the decision of one individual, and the United Nations could not remain indifferent while Algerians and French were slaughtering each other. If the United Nations did not call for a swift and democratic solution of the grave Algerian crisis, such an omission would further the designs of those who wished to prevent the Organization from doing its duty.

26. The struggle against colonialism was fully justified by history. Those who sang the praises of French colonialism were pawns of imperialism. After 130 years of occupation, 82 per cent of the Algerian population were illiterate, the infant mortality rate was 254 per thousand, and there were almost 3 million unemployed or under-employed. The French minority in Algeria, which numbered nearer 800,000 than 1 million people, would have all the necessary guarantees. Mr. Ferhat Abbas had stated that there would be neither first-class nor second-class citizens in an independent Algeria; Algeria was the heritage of all Algerians, whatever their origin. The only possible obstacle to a solution, therefore, was France's cherished hope of establishing an Algerian federation and bringing about pacification through the imposition of its own will.

27. In his speech of 1 November 1960, Mr. Ferhat Abbas had stated that to consent to the cease-fire desired by France would be to betray the dead and the banner of the army of liberation; it would be to doom Algeria to a new colonialism as evil as the old one. The war for Algerian independence had compelled all nations to choose sides. Aligned on the Algerian side were the anti-colonialist and the peace-loving peoples. On the side of France were the imperialists, who continued to fight for their conquests and their privileges. The new Cuba reaffirmed its faith in the triumph of the Algerians and expressed its warm sympathy with the Algerian guerillas. The Cuban delegation would vote for the draft resolution submitted by a group of African and Asian countries (A/C.1/L.265 and Add.1-2).

28. Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) said that the recent terrible slaughter in Algiers and other Algerian cities proved that the United Nations had been seriously mistaken in not adopting any resolution during the fourteenth session of the General Assembly and it could no longer shirk its obligations, which were stipulated in the Charter itself. While the head of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic held the French Government responsible for that genocide, the Lebanese delegation, for its part, placed the responsibility on the United Nations, believing that it must intervene without delay if it was not to betray its mission. The Western Powers should also be asked whether they were prepared to safeguard the interests of their ally, France, by encouraging it with their aid and with the silence that they had maintained in the United Nations. That attitude had, in fact, led them to the edge of the abyss.

29. General de Gaulle's declaration on 15 September 1959, recognizing without reservation the Algerian people's right to decide its destiny, was one of the major landmarks along the pathway to human liberation. It was impossible to underestimate that solemn promise by France, coming after the one it had just fulfilled with regard to fifteen African countries. But the question arose why Algeria too should not enjoy the same freedom as those African countries. It was true that France was concerned over what would become of the French minority and of French economic, social and cultural interests if the majority voted for independence. But the head of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had repeatedly declared that the new Republic would make no distinction between Algerians and Muslims, and that there would be no attempt to deport those who wished to remain Algerian and that Algeria would be the birthright of all those who lived there, regardless of their origin. In that connexion, nothing prevented the United Nations from taking note of that undertaking by the Provisional Government, as several representatives in the Committee had done at the fourteenth session, among them the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Republic (1075th meeting). As regards French interests, an agreement might be concluded, as had been done between France and a number of African States, and also between France and Lebanon. Lebanon also provided the most striking example possible of the union of different communities constituting a strong and homogeneous nation. Along those same lines, he recalled that the Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops of France, held at Paris from 12 to 14 October 1960, had declared its earnest wish that a wise solution, worthy of France and of the noble example of unselfishness it had just given the world with respect to the young African nations, might bring to Algeria as quickly as possible a just peace which would respect all the legitimate aspirations, rights, interests and traditions of the various com-
munities, so that they might all work together for the prosperity of an Algeria no longer torn by war. In the last analysis, the rights of Algerians of European stock and the French interests could not fail to be safeguarded. Therefore they should not constitute an obstacle to the exercise of the Algerian people's right, regardless of their racial origin, to decide their political destiny.

30. The Algerian people's right to self-determination, which had been formally recognized, implied the power to exercise it. In that respect, General de Gaulle certainly did not intend to take back with one hand what he had given with the other. Furthermore, he had the support of the French nation, for France was not the turbulent minority of Algeria, and the political and intellectual groups, as well as the episcopate of France, had spoken out in support of de Gaulle's policy, i.e., in favour of the Algerian people's rights and the end of the war. The United Nations too must give its support to those who desired liberty, justice and peace for Algeria. The Algerian leaders had made no secret of their intention of welcoming any aid that might be offered them, from whatever source, in order to win their fight. Thus, the conflict threatened to spread dangerously and become worldwide. It was certain that no one, Algeria no more than France, would benefit if that happened.

31. It was not a solution against France that was sought, but one for peace and justice, which would be to the advantage of France, Algeria and all the peoples of the world. When the General Assembly had abandoned Algeria at the previous session, by not adopting a resolution on the pretext of not embarrassing the French Government, the war had been intensified, and the French opponents of General de Gaulle had hardened in their opposition, regarding the silence of the United Nations as approval of their attitude. It was to be expected, then, if the United Nations again took no decision, that the problem would become even more complex and that the conflict would spread. The United Nations must therefore act to aid General de Gaulle to attain his objective. When his enemies were convinced that the world supported him in his determination to fulfill his undertaking, he would be able to take effective action.

32. The opponents of freedom for Algeria being at the very heart of that country, the administration which would be responsible for arranging the plebiscite continuing to be, to a large extent, a French administration thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Algerians of French origin, and the Army, which General de Gaulle had wished to render non-political, being fully engaged in the war, that Army could not perform its mission with the requisite impartiality, and measures would therefore have to be taken to ensure a true and accurate expression of the national will. In the past the League of Nations and the United Nations had organized plebiscites. The United Nations, it was true, had done so in territories under its trusteeship. But when a country itself requested the assistance of the United Nations, there could surely be no objection to it. No one was in doubt about the Algerian people's agreement. That was a much more determinant fact than a mere legal fiction such as the idea of trusteeship.

33. Since the administrative services of Algeria which would conduct the plebiscite were not suited to the task, the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.285 and Add.1-2) called for the organization of the plebiscite by the United Nations, an arrangement which would preclude any later dispute. The Algerians were determined to continue the struggle unless the plebiscite was provided with adequate safeguards. That was why the Lebanese delegation was in favour of the plebiscite. The United Nations could not shirk its responsibilities in that connexion, for some day not only Algeria but France itself would call it to account. It should, therefore, act without delay in order to prevent continuation of the war, which, by preventing—perhaps permanently—future reconciliation and co-operation between France and Algeria, might cause irreparable damage.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.