Chairman: Sir Claude COREA (Ceylon).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Kurka (Czechoslovakia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 71

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

GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION (continued)

1. Mr. WIRJOPRANOTO (Indonesia) said that the Algerian war was not an isolated question but was part of the general struggle of nationalism against colonialism. Some representatives, having in mind the problem of the European minority in Algeria, might consider that an over-simplification. But Ferhat Abbas, Prime Minister of the Algerian Provisional Government, had guaranteed the safety of the Europeans and their right to live and work in Algeria either as Algerian citizens or as Frenchmen. The European extremists in Algeria were, however, not concerned with their rights in a new Algeria but with maintaining their dominant position.

2. He called upon the great Powers to join with the African and Asian nations in recognizing the Algerian people's right to self-determination and independence and the unity and territorial integrity of Algeria, and in accepting the responsibility of the United Nations to organize and supervise a referendum in Algeria, as demanded by the Algerian people, so that the Algerians could freely decide the future of their entire country. If they were denied aid by the Western Powers, the Algerian nationalist leaders would inevitably seek it wherever it could be obtained, thus involving Algeria in the world ideological power struggle.

3. The French insisted that peace could not return in Algeria until a military victory had been won. As a result, the war was being intensified, and now blood was flowing not only in the mountains but also in the streets of Algeria's major cities. The French did not seem to understand that genuine and lasting peace could not be imposed by force. The United Nations must no longer stand idly by but must take immediate and effective action. A referendum must be held in Algeria under United Nations control and supervision, so that the Algerian people could exercise its right of self-determination. He therefore urged the adoption of the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.1/L.265 and Add.1-2).

4. Mr. BUDO (Albania) said that although the United Nations had dealt with the Algerian question at six consecutive sessions, it had made no effective contribution to a peaceful solution in conformity with the principles of its Charter, particularly the principle of self-determination. Under the influence of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), especially the United States, which had made common cause with France, the General Assembly had adopted a series of vague resolutions containing nothing more than expressions of hope, or had even, as at the fourteenth session, failed to adopt any resolution. The Western Powers had argued that nothing should be done to injure France's sensibilities or to prejudice the chances of a peaceful solution; but it was now clear that the failure of the United Nations to take any action had served the cause of war and colonialism in Algeria rather than that of peace and justice. Now that the war in Algeria had gone on for six years, and that it was becoming increasingly clear that the Algerian problem posed a threat to peace in Africa and throughout the world, the United Nations could no longer evade its responsibility to ensure a solution in conformity with the right of all peoples to freedom, independence and self-determination.

5. Since the outbreak of the Algerian war, France had combined the use of force with a variety of manoeuvres—such as solemn promises, and laws based on the fiction that Algeria was an integral part of France—designed to deceive the Algerian people. However, their efforts had been defeated by the steadfastness of the Algerian nationalist fighters. Only after five years of war and many debates in the United Nations had the President of the French Republic, General de Gaulle, on 16 September 1959, finally recognized the Algerian people's right to self-determination. Whatever its motives had been in recognizing that right and thus abandoning the fiction of a "French Algeria", France could now no longer deny the existence of the Algerian people as a national entity completely distinct from the French people. The Algerian Provisional Government had welcomed France's recognition of the principle of self-determination, and had stated its willingness to negotiate with the French Government on the conditions for a cease-fire and the guarantees necessary to enable the Algerian people to decide its future in complete freedom.

6. The fact that both parties had accepted the principle of self-determination as the basis for a peaceful settlement of the problem had been a promising new development, which should have expedited negotiations. Instead, France had used it as a pretext for delay, and with the support of its Western allies had prevented the General Assembly from adopting an
appropriate resolution at its fourteenth session on the ground that any such action might hamper efforts for a peaceful and negotiated settlement. The United Nations was by now used to those tactics, which the French Government employed whenever the Algerian question was discussed; but they were none the less dangerous, and the United Nations should ignore them and carry out its duty of achieving a peaceful settlement.

7. It was only on 14 June 1960 that the French Head of State had announced that he was prepared to meet the leaders of the National Liberation Front (FLN) at Paris with a view to settling the conflict. In the same speech, he had stated that Algeria would be Algerian, and had admitted that the Algerian problem had existed ever since 1830—the year in which Algeria had been conquered by the French colonialists. At first, that statement had seemed to indicate some progress, even as compared with the earlier statement in which President de Gaulle had recognized the Algerian people's right of self-determination. Unfortunately, the reception accorded at Melun to the Algerian emissaries who had accepted General de Gaulle's invitation in good faith had shattered those hopes. They had been treated as envoys of a defeated army who had come to France to hear the terms. It had become quite clear, both from the official communiqué and from reports in the Press, that the French Government had intended to lay down the conditions for the meeting unilaterally. According to the French representatives themselves, Mr. Ferhat Abbas would have been allowed to meet President de Gaulle only after agreement had been reached on a cease-fire. In the circumstances, the failure of the Melun "pourparlers" was only to have been expected.

8. But although it had declined to take part in negotiations which would serve no useful purpose, the Algerian Provisional Government had left the door open for further "pourparlers" preparatory to a meeting between its Prime Minister, Mr. Ferhat Abbas, and President de Gaulle. On 4 July 1960 it had expressed its willingness to participate in such "pourparlers" provided that the French Government showed a sincere desire to negotiate and refrained from imposing conditions unilaterally. The responsibility for the fact that such preliminary negotiations had still not taken place lay with the French Government. In the statements he had made during his tour of Normandy in July 1960, President de Gaulle, while still upholding the right of the Algerians to self-determination, had not contradicted the statement of his Prime Minister that the Algerian people could not choose independence. Indeed, he had even gone so far as to say that the terms he had dictated at Melun still held good.

9. It was also clear from General de Gaulle's statements and other French sources that the French Government had no intention of settling the question through negotiations with the Algerian Provisional Government alone, although that Government enjoyed the support of all Algerians. Instead it had established "commissions d'élus", composed of all kinds of politicians who did not represent the Algerian people and were quite unqualified to speak for them, with which it proposed to decide Algeria's future on an a priori basis.

10. The French Government's dangerously ambiguous attitude with regard to self-determination showed that it had not learnt the lessons of recent history. Similar methods, it would be recalled, had already failed in Viet-Nam. Anyone seriously concerned for a peaceful solution of the Algerian problem should realize that effective negotiations could be held only with the genuine representatives of the fighting Algerians—in other words, with the Algerian Provisional Government.

11. Another dangerous aspect of the French Government's policy was the fact that it envisaged the possibility of partitioning Algeria, in the event that the Algerian people chose independence. President de Gaulle's statement of 4 November 1960 that France would take "the necessary measures to safeguard those Algerians who wished to remain French" was a denial of the very principle of self-determination. If the Algerians were not allowed freely to decide their future, the proposed popular consultation would be a mere farce; and its results would be devoid of meaning, since the matter would already have been decided unilaterally by France. Moreover, the French Government's interpretation of self-determination was incompatible with universally accepted legal principles. Algeria was an indivisible unity, and the principle of self-determination must be applied to the Algerian people as a whole. The voice of the majority must be valid for the whole of Algeria; any other approach could only prolong the war and endanger world peace.

12. As everyone knew, the war was continuing with ever greater intensity, and the civilian population of Algeria was being subjected to the most brutal repression. But the battle which the Algerian people were fighting so heroically, despite the military superiority of its adversary, had not been of its own choosing. The war had been forced on it by the French colonialists, who, with the assistance of the other imperialist Powers of the NATO alliance, headed by the United States, were attempting to perpetuate their exploitation of Algeria. It was an indisputable fact that France was receiving essential aid from the United States in the form of military equipment and financial and technical assistance. That aid was furnished either directly or within the framework of NATO.

13. If France had not been receiving that assistance, much more progress would have been made in dealing with the Algerian problem. It was mainly because of the influence of the United States and its NATO allies that the United Nations had taken such a passive stand on the question of Algeria. NATO now constituted a "Holy Alliance" which, in its endeavours to perpetuate colonial domination in all its forms, had become an instrument of war in Algeria, the Congo and elsewhere, and had prevented the United Nations from implementing the principles of its Charter, in particular, the principle of self-determination.

14. The Algerian people would undoubtedly be victorious in its struggle, despite the combined efforts of the imperialists. For its strength derived from its knowledge that it was fighting for a just cause and its determination to fight to the death. Moreover, the overthrow of colonialism was an irreversible historical process. At a time when the total abolition of colonialism—now being considered in the General Assembly under agenda item 57—had become the essential condition of peace and justice, the United Nations should shake off its apathy and face up to its responsibilities under the Charter.
15. The tragic incidents of the preceding few days in Algeria illustrated the dire consequences of the Algerian war, and showed what a threat it constituted to world peace. They also demonstrated that the Algerian people was determined to win its independence. They provided a salutary lesson for those who believed that they could preserve their interests in Algeria by force and by sowing discord.

16. Now that it was clear that the French Government was refusing to provide the essential guarantees for the application of the principle of self-determination it was time for the United Nations to heed the request of the Algerian Provisional Government for a referendum under United Nations supervision. True to its principles as a People's Democracy, Albania always supported the legitimate claims of the Algerian people in its struggle for independence. It therefore considered the Algerian Provisional Government's request fully justified and would lend its full support to the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.265 and Add.1-2).

17. Mr. SLIM (Tunisia), exercising his right of reply, said that at the previous meeting the United Kingdom representative had referred to the apprehensions expressed by the Tunisian delegation at the 1121st meeting regarding the danger of a partition of Algeria. That danger had been implicit in President de Gaulle's statement of 16 September 1959; it had been underlined by other official statements which had never been repudiated by members of the French Government; and it had reappeared very clearly in President de Gaulle's statement of 4 November 1960. The United Kingdom representative apparently wished to avoid taking any position on that aspect of the problem; yet, surely, he was aware of the disastrous consequences of partition in Korea, Indo-China and Palestine. The partition of Algeria would create a constant threat to international peace and security—especially to the security of Algeria's neighbours.

18. The United Kingdom representative had also referred to Tunisia's misgivings regarding President de Gaulle's plan for reorganizing the administrative structure of Algeria, allegedly in order to afford the Algerians a measure of autonomy. But that plan was inspired by the same policy which had placed Bao Dai in power in Indo-China, Ben Arafat in Morocco in 1953, and Mzali in Tunisia in 1954. In all the three countries concerned, the effect of those attempts to install French puppets had been to give new impetus to the nationalists' struggle for independence. The implementation of such a plan in Algeria would merely prolong the war. The United Kingdom representative had expressed regret that the Algerian Provisional Government was refusing to co-operate with President de Gaulle in building a so-called "Algerian Algeria". But co-operation was not an end in itself; it could be fruitful only if it was based on agreed and honestly accepted principles and procedures.

19. So long as the French Government persisted in its refusal to discuss with the Algerian Provisional Government not only the arrangements for a cease-fire, but also all the political conditions and guarantees necessary for a genuinely free referendum on self-determination in Algeria, Tunisia could not— to its great regret—share the hopes expressed regarding the value of negotiations. For the Algerians did not consider themselves defeated, and quite logically would not agree to a cease-fire until they had obtained from France all the necessary guarantees for a free referendum.

20. In that connexion, he recalled Tunisia's own experience. In 1954, Tunisia had been engaged in an armed struggle for its independence. Early in the month of August, President Bourguiba had accepted an offer from the then head of the French Government, Mr. Mendès-France, to enter into political negotiations. While the negotiations were going on, fighting had continued between the Tunisian nationalists and French troops, and it had not been until three months later, when the two parties had obtained assurance concerning the sincerity of their respective intentions, that a cease-fire had been agreed upon. In the case of Algeria, however, as the Melun episode had proved, it was the French Government and not the Algerian nationalists who were refusing to negotiate.

21. The United Kingdom representative had asserted that by demanding guarantees of the authenticity of the referendum, the Algerian Provisional Government was casting doubt on President de Gaulle's sincerity. It was significant, however, that President de Gaulle himself had had serious doubts concerning the preparation and conduct of votes organized in Algeria by the French authorities there, and that he had admitted the need for guarantees of the kind desired by the nationalists.

22. The representative of Senegal had made a special effort, in his statement at the 1129th meeting, not to offend either the French or the Algerians, and, primarily, not to wound the sensibilities of General de Gaulle. Unfortunately, in so doing, he had not served the cause of the Algerian people. He had, for example, made a distinction between cease-fire negotiations, which, he had acknowledged, should be held between the French Government and the Algerian Provisional Government, and negotiations on the conditions for a referendum, which, he had asserted, should be held between the French Government and the representatives of the Algerian people. Those representatives would presumably be chosen to reflect all trends of opinion in Algeria; thus there would also be representatives of the "ultras". It was inconceivable that France should entertain the idea of discussing the solution of the conflict not merely with its adversaries but with its own agents in Algeria. Whatever French interests were to be protected in Algeria could well be protected by the French Government. As for the interests of the Algerians, they were identical with those of the Algerian Provisional Government, as had been amply proved by the spontaneous demonstrations which had taken place during the recent visit of President de Gaulle to Algeria. During the talks on the independence of Morocco and Tunisia, the French Government had not demanded that pro-French extremists should be present; it had quite properly recognized that the negotiations on the future of those countries should be held with the nationalists who had been fighting for independence. For all those reasons, the distinction drawn by the representative of Senegal had been a dangerous one, and the Tunisian delegation sincerely hoped that he would not maintain it.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.