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Chairman: Mr. Djalal ABDOH (Iran).

AGENDA ITEM 59

The question of Algeria (A/3617 and Add.1) (continued)

1. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) said that, although his delegation believed that the question of Algeria should have had priority in the Committee's debate because of the actual war in progress there, it had not pressed its view while France was still without a government. In the presence of a spokesman of the French Government, the question could now be considered with all the seriousness it deserved. As that spokesman had himself admitted, the situation in Algeria had already caused too much bloodshed and too much human suffering. It was a tragedy involving a whole nation, which would leave its mark on future generations of Algerians and French alike; but for the Algerians, it was a sacrifice in a worthy cause. To hope for a speedy solution of that tragic situation was not, as Mr. Pineau, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, had declared, naive; it was the expression of a humanitarian desire for peace in keeping with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. The Algerian question should be considered in the context of the recent history of the whole of North Africa. It was paradoxical to find that Algeria was being denied its freedom when the neighbouring peoples of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco had broken the chains of colonialism and imperialism and had emerged as independent, sovereign States. The world could not tolerate the continued existence of a subjugated nation in a region which now enjoyed all the attributes of freedom. The Algerian liberation movement was part of the liberation movement in all of North Africa. Algeria's struggle to realize its national aspirations and achieve independence was no different from the struggle of the other peoples of North Africa, and it was a political fiction to assert otherwise. Like other colonial Powers, France had been in Algeria for more than a century; unlike those other Powers, it had refused to release its hold, and Algeria represented a last bulwark of French imperialism. Algeria had as much right to revolt against French domination as any nation which had once been a subject people, for freedom was not the monopoly of any one Power or of any one continent.

3. Algeria was not part of France; it was part of the Arab homeland, and its people were part of the Arab people, to which were bound by ties of culture,

language and tradition. Algeria had been identified with the Arab world centuries before France became a State. It was fighting, not to build a new State or to exercise a new right, but to regain its established right to independence and to reconstitute its statehood. For it had once been a fully sovereign, international entity, enjoying treaty relations with other sovereign States including Great Britain, the Netherlands and the United States. Between 1619 and 1830, France had concluded with Algeria fifty-seven international agreements such as were normally concluded between sovereign States.

4. The pretext used by the French for their invasion and military occupation of Algeria in 1830 had been an affront to the erstwhile French Consul by the Dey. That pretext had not, however, suppressed the desire of the Algerians to retain their national existence. They had never surrendered; unlike the provinces of Savoy and Nice, they had resisted French occupation and were still resisting integration into France. With only brief intervals of tranquillity, the struggle was going on. It would be recalled that thousands of Algerians had been slaughtered by French troops on Armistice Day in 1945, and that was only one incident in years of brutal repression. There was war in Algeria and there was genocide; on those grounds alone, United Nations intervention was warranted. Mr. Pineau's charges of terrorism by the rebels were false. On the other hand, reports in the Press, including the French Press, emphasized the ruthlessness of French tactics in Algeria. There were reports of wholesale slaughter, of the shelling of whole villages, of thousands thrown into concentration camps, of the kidnapping of hostages and of executions without trial. In 1956, five national leaders had been kidnapped by the French while on a mission of peace and negotiation. No one had been spared the French rule of terror, and 300,000 Algerian refugees had been forced to seek refuge in adjoining countries.

5. The General Assembly, in its desire to offer France another chance to resolve the Algerian situation had adopted a moderate resolution at its eleventh session. That resolution (1012 (XI)) was neither condemnatory nor mandatory; it merely asked for respect of the principles of the Charter. That resolution had been disregarded by France, which was responding to the Assembly's recommendation by continuing to wage a war which did not even respect the traditions of war. France was practising genocide against a people solely because that people wanted its independence. It was a war which France was imposing upon itself. Moreover, since the adoption of the resolution, France had stepped up its campaign of terror—a campaign advertised as one of pacification—thus provoking the indignation and condemnation of people everywhere and not least in France itself. In that connexion, he quoted a letter from 357 eminent French professors and journalists indicting France for its

torture of Algerian prisoners, summary execution of hostages and other brutalities; a declaration of the Cardinals and Bishops of France condemning French terrorism; and a letter from a former French Minister of National Education protesting actions which were "a dishonour to France". He further quoted a declaration from sixty-one leading French scientists characterizing French methods in Algeria as a "danger to the moral values of the entire nation". The Saudi Arabian delegation commended those Frenchmen for their protests against French terroristic methods and could cite other French brutalities; its intention was not, however, to slander France, but to seek a solution in accordance with the principles of the Charter.

6. The Algerian situation could not be resolved properly unless certain absolute truths were recognized. The fiction of integration with France, a miserable failure, had to be discarded. Algerian statehood must be recognized. Algeria would continue to be integrated but in Arab life. Regardless of the military force mobilized by France, Algeria would ultimately gain its freedom. The Algerian war was draining France's human and economic resources, and it was a losing battle for France, despite Mr. Pineau's assurances that conditions were returning to normal. Since the spring of 1956, the French had consistently been wrong in their predictions of a French victory by force of arms. Moreover, the French contention that communists had infiltrated the liberation movement was an example of the use of a slogan to defeat national movements, and was intended to marshal the votes of the anti-communist countries. Mr. Pineau had admitted as much when he had declared (913th meeting) that if the French were to withdraw from Algeria, the communist elements would be in the best position to assume power.

7. In reply to the French argument that the Algerian rebels were receiving foreign assistance, he stated that it was the duty of the Arab world to sponsor the cause of Algeria because it was part of the Arab homeland. Moreover, all liberation movements throughout history had received assistance and support in one form or another. Most of the States represented in the Committee had either given or received such assistance. Many Algerians had died to help France to regain its liberty in both World Wars and France had not repaid that debt.

8. The division or partition of Algeria was unthinkable; Algerian territory should remain intact. Mr. Pineau's threat that self-determination for the Algerians would mean the division of the country into several States was a means of intimidating the people of Algeria. The truth was that the creation of a corpus separatum for the French in Algeria would be as impractical as had been the creation of the State of Israel in the Arab Middle East. It would establish a source of disturbance and friction, to the everlasting regret of the French.

9. Finally, the French must abandon the idea of the racial superiority of the French settlers, the colons of North Africa. No special treatment could be accorded to any community in Algeria. Eleven million indigenous inhabitants should not be governed by the wishes of half a million settlers of diversified origin. It should be noted that the National Liberation Front (FLN) had solemnly declared that the French would be accepted into the Algerian national community on a basis of

individual equality; that they might choose between integration into the Algerian nation or retention of their French citizenship with the status of aliens, which would guarantee them respect for their legitimate interests but not the privileges inherent in the colonial system. In a country where the non-Algerian population represented at most one-tenth of the total population, it was incorrect to speak, as the United Kingdom representative, Mr. Noble, had spoken (915th meeting), of a "multiracial community". Mr. Noble's view had been refuted by a former United Kingdom representative, Mr. Nutting, in his articles published in the New York Herald Tribune. According to Mr. Nutting, both the numbers of genuine French nationals and the strength of their feelings had been deliberately overstated to bolster the French case, and the French were blinding themselves to the reality of the Moslem population's nationalism.

10. The unconditional recognition of the independence of Algeria was essential as a basis for a settlement of the Algerian question. The burden rested squarely on the free world to recognize that independence. Secondly, France must recognize a provisional Algerian government with which it should enter into immediate negotiations at a round table conference jointly with Tunisia and Morocco. France should rely on the balanced judgement on Tunisia and Morocco, which had recognized the FLN as the chief spokesman of the liberation movement. Indeed, the recognition of a free Algerian government was being seriously contemplated in a number of quarters. Unless France accepted negotiations on that basis, it would lose forever what little it could still save in Algeria. Thirdly, political prisoners should be released in order to create a climate favourable for negotiations. Finally, when those three prerequisites had been fulfilled, there should be a cease-fire, applicable to all sectors of the fighting.

11. The French representative had said (913th meeting) that there should be no political preconditions for negotiations. Independence was not a condition; it was an inherent right. Moreover, it was the French themselves who were establishing political preconditions; they wanted to enact the legislation governing the elections and to prescribe the methods and procedures within the framework of a loi-cadre (basic law) which they had elaborated. Such elections would not be Algerian elections; they would not be democratic elections. Nevertheless, Mr. Pineau had been supported in his views by the United Kingdom representative, no doubt with an eye to the French position on the next item of the Committee's agenda. According to Mr. Noble, the United Nations should not attempt to introduce ideas into Algeria from New York. Yet that was precisely the purpose of the United Nations, the only way it could influence the situation by peaceful means.

12. France was offering to negotiate on the condition that the Algerians abandoned their demand for independence, refrained from establishing an Algerian government, and desisted from all talk of Algerian sovereignty and statehood. No sane man with the cause of liberty at heart would advise the Algerians to cease fire on those terms. Furthermore, if, as France contended, Tunisia and Morocco could not serve as mediators because they were not neutral, could it reasonably be argued that France was neutral enough to conduct elections? As a party to the conflict, France was cer-

tainly not qualified for that task. The French spoke of democracy while dictating a statute for Algeria. The loi-cadre was not a proper solution, but would represent a modern form of colonial rule. The Arabs rejected it as totally unacceptable.

13. The only choice, since Mr. Pineau had given the United Nations a choice, was to bring all possible pressure for Algeria's freedom, to play a positive role in relieving human suffering and in promoting the legitimate aspirations of the Algerian people. The Saudi Arabian delegation hoped that a fully independent and sovereign Algeria would soon take its place in the United Nations. That would be the only basis for permanent friendly relations between Algeria and France.

14. Mr. PICCIONI (Italy) said that the problem of Algeria was one of great interest to Italy since it affected the development and the peace and stability of peoples living on the shores of the Mediterranean.

15. The problem was one which called for prudence; summary judgements, polemics and undue haste were all out of place. The efforts of those who were trying to find a solution must be encouraged, and all aspects of the problem should be appraised in an effort to harmonize the interests of all.

16. In his delegation's view, the French Government was empowered by the Charter to consider the Algerian problem as a domestic one; nevertheless, in consenting to furnish information on the situation in Algeria and on its own intentions, the French Government had not only shown its respect for the General Assembly, but had also provided facts from which the United Nations could draw certain conclusions.

17. The resolution adopted at the eleventh session represented a well-balanced and realistic compromise between varying opinions. In adopting it, the Assembly had never thought that the Algerian problem would be solved in a few months; indeed, the resolution had clearly brought out the complex nature of the problem and the limitations of the United Nations.

18. Those limitations were not necessarily legal in character, though such limitations did exist and must be respected. The limitations he had in mind were self-imposed and arose from considerations of reality, moderation and wisdom. The resolution expressed the hope that a peaceful, democratic and just solution would be found in conformity with the principles of the Charter. The criteria thus enumerated could not be taken in isolation—no solution could be democratic which was not also peaceful and just. It was impossible, on the other hand, not to separate the question of the cessation of hostilities from that of establishing legislative and executive bodies in an Algeria which possessed its own entity, or from the question of negotiations to establish the content of Algerian institutions. Indeed, since the solution of the problems arising was a logical progression, those problems would tend to become separated, by time if by nothing else. The cessation of hostilities could result only from agreement between the French authorities and the revolutionary leaders; the content of Algerian political institutions could be determined only on the political level, and if that implied that the will of the Algerian populations must be made manifest in order that their national aspirations could be satisfied, those who were to interpret that will must be designated or selected

legitimately and their powers and responsibilities must be the expression of a freely-manifested will.

19. It was not for the Committee to decide how much influence the revolutionary leaders had and whether or not they interpreted the aspirations of the people. Terrorism, as the French representative had said, could not confer a right of representation. The only way in which that right could be expressed was by elections. It might be objected that the patterns established by elections were not always true to life, but the results of free elections were never so distorted as to make the essentials of the popular will unrecognizable. It would be dangerous to accept other methods which might reflect only the persuasion of one man or one group claiming to express part of the popular will. No method of ascertaining that will other than elections would give concrete results.

20. He did not wish to go into details of the loi-cadre or to consider whether it was a statute imposed from above. It was a courageous act on the part of the French Government and represented tangible progress towards a solution of the Algerian problem. There had to be a starting point for all processes of democratic reform and the loi-cadre, the evolutionary nature of which had been stressed by the French representative, was such a starting point.

21. The continuance of lawlessness and violence in Algeria would lead only to further obstruction and delays, would prolong the enmity and hatred and would make a solution even more difficult. It would thus have the reverse effect of what the United Nations was seeking to achieve.

22. The Mediterranean area must regain stability in the interests of the development and progress of its inhabitants and such development would not be realized without the preservation of the basic values of Mediterranean civilization and without a constructive and realistic effort to arrive at mutual understanding.

23. His delegation had confidence in those who were trying to find a peaceful, democratic and just solution. Democratic methods were indispensable if the interests involved were to be reconciled and if the rights of all the parties and all the elements of a population were to be safeguarded. They were the only methods capable of breaking the vicious circle of lawlessness and terrorism and restoring peace and order and the freedom and dignity of the human person.

24. Mr. GUNWARDENE (Ceylon) said that the French Foreign Minister had presented his country's case with moderation, restraint and dignity. The Tunisian representative, too, had made (914th meeting) a well-reasoned and constructive contribution to the debate, while the Syrian representative had expressed (915th meeting) very candidly the point of view of the Arab nations in warning that no power vacuum existed in the Middle East. It was time for the Western world to recognize the dynamism of Arab nationalism instead of talking about the replacement of an imaginary vacuum by communism or Arab imperialism, for if it continued to treat that nationalism with indifference or hostility a wide area of conflict might be created which could endanger the peace of the world.

25. The Algerian question must be considered within that context. The Arab nations were determined to free the Arab world of colonialism; it should not

therefore be surprising that they should concentrate their attention on obtaining freedom for the Algerian people. They had denied that they were sending arms and supplies to the Algerian rebels, and there was no reason why the French representative should not accept those assurances. But even if the complaint was well founded it was only to be expected that the Arab countries should express their solidarity by assisting the emancipation of others in their group. The sooner the Western Powers realized that the question of Algeria was one which deeply concerned, not only the people of Algeria, but all the nations of the area the less painful and more rapid the solution of the problem would be.

26. The issue should not be considered a test of military strength between the Arab world on one hand and France and its allies on the other. As the French representative had himself said, nations friendly to France—namely, Morocco and Tunisia—were already involved in the dispute. Moreover, the Algerian people, by their three-year struggle, had shown the depth of their desire for self-determination. The policy adopted by the French Government could never be successfully carried out unless the whole Algerian population was exterminated and the territory subjected to a deliberate "scorched earth" policy. France was too civilized to carry such a policy out. It was certain, therefore, that the Government and people of France would realize before it was too late that they must recognize the right of the Algerian people to freedom and independence.

27. The Asian countries pleaded the cause of Algeria not in a spirit of animosity, but in an effort to reconcile the aspirations of the Algerian people with the legitimate interests of the French Republic. The countries which had been emancipated as a result of the foresight and statesmanship of the United Kingdom were eager to see other Asian and African countries free too. He had no wish to belittle the recent efforts of the French Government to introduce land reform, educational advancement and a greater measure of local government. But when a people was struggling to be free, such measures could never be sufficient to satisfy their legitimate aspirations. Moreover, the fact that Morocco and Tunisia, which had a common culture with Algeria, had already become independent nations would in itself be a sufficient incentive to the people of Algeria to seek their freedom.

28. France was imposing heavy burdens on those new nations because of the flight of Algerian refugees from French militarism, while the situation of Algeria itself was far worse. It could hardly be said that the rule of law existed in Algeria today. The conscience of the world had been aroused a year before by events in Hungary, but the toll in human life taken by those events had been only a fraction of the toll in Algeria. It was not surprising therefore that the world's conscience had been aroused and that many sections of French public opinion itself had expressed grave concern at the results of the Government's policy in Algeria. The world could no longer afford to look upon that tragic situation with equanimity or as a mere question of French prestige. It was to be hoped that France would give proof once again of its belief in the great principles of human freedom which it had itself taught to other nations.

29. His delegation did not share the French representative's view that the United Nations was incompetent to deal with Algeria. Such a question could not be decided by the unilateral declaration of a Member State. Ceylon continued to believe that the General Assembly was fully competent to consider the question of Algeria and that Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter in no way precluded such consideration.

30. The French representative had also stated that France had been in Algeria since 1830 and that Algeria had been integrated into the French Republic in 1848. In that connexion, it was pertinent to inquire how France had entered Algeria, for if French rule there had been installed by military intervention, then its present rule could be regarded only as a colonial occupation maintained without regard to the wishes of the Algerian people. It was also relevant to ask whether the Algerian people had been consulted in the act of integration for if they had not been then the argument that Algeria was an integral part of France was no more than a legal fiction. In the present world situation, a legislative act of 1848 could not be held to be valid reason to deny a people their freedom and their right to self-determination. Nor would the facts of history and geography be controverted by such a fiction. The very fact that the Algerian people had consistently refused the incentives offered them to remain within the French Republic, such as membership in the French National Assembly, employment and office in the French Republic on the same footing as French citizens, and so on, was proof enough that they had an identity of their own which they wished to preserve and embody through Algerian sovereignty.

31. The argument that Algeria was made up of different racial groups such as the Arabs, the Berbers and others and that it was in the best interests of all those groups that France should continue to rule was so unconvincing as to need no answer. It could hardly be seriously suggested that the Berbers were closer to the French than to the Arabs.

32. He had already referred to the loss of life which had resulted from the violence in Algeria. The economic consequences of the situation were also very serious and could not be justified even from the point of view of France's interest itself. When a solution could be found on the basis of co-operation it was unwise to follow a policy which had and would cost so much, without the faintest hope of ultimate success.

33. The French representative had said that France could not abandon the 1.2 million French people of Algeria to the mercies of the indigenous population. Of course, those people were not all of French origin, but in any case there was no reason why they should nor retain their rights and continue to live in a free Algeria. Every country in the world had minority problems and surely a solution could be found to the problem of the French minority in Algeria. There could of course be no question of dual citizenship or of special rights and privileges. The French colons must choose between French and Algerian citizenship, but once the decision was made there could be no question that their rights in Algeria would be protected in every way that was not inconsistent with Algeria's sovereignty. The presence of a million French colons could not be used as an argument for denying freedom to the Algerians, particularly in view of the fact that the colons had come to Algeria of their own volition

and with no encouragement or invitation from the Algerian themselves. Once the present bitterness had subsided the two peoples should have no difficulty in living side by side and contributing jointly to the welfare of Algeria.

34. The French representative had asked why the promise of independence should precede a cease-fire. It was surely obvious that all the fighting that had taken place in the last three years had been for the one purpose of achieving freedom and that in those circumstances and unconditional cease-fire could be interpreted only as a surrender. Moreover the demand for an unconditional cease-fire was based on the assumption that Algeria was an integral part of France, which was precisely the point at issue. It would therefore be unrealistic to expect a cease-fire without an assurance from the French authorities that Algeria would be allowed to determine its own future. Such a declaration was not too much to expect of the French Government. The United Kingdom Government had made such declarations during the Second World War with regard to India, Burma and Ceylon and had fulfilled its pledges within two years of the termination of hostilities. The French Government should perform a similar act of statesmanship to put an end to the tragic situation in Algeria. France had already negotiated with so-called rebels under similar circumstances, and the results had justified its action. In that connexion, the offer made by the King of Morocco and the President of Tunisia regarding negotiations with the Algerian leaders was an opportunity which the French Government should certainly accept.

35. The proposals outlined by the French representative continued to be based on the premise that Algeria was a part of metropolitan France—a premise which was unacceptable to the Asian and African countries—and contained nothing which had not already been proposed at the eleventh session. What was needed now was a completely new and fresh approach.

36. If the French Government was sincerely anxious to negotiate with the rebels, it must accept the fact that the Algerian leaders were opposed to French rule over Algeria. Granting that premise, there was no reason why an election should be held merely to discover with whom the French Government should negotiate. If it continued to maintain that a large body of Algerian opinion supported the French administration, the proposal might have been expected to take a different form. For example, a plebiscite on the question, to be held under United Nations supervision and after a cease-fire, might have been suggested. But there was no need for such a plebiscite when the people of Algeria had unmistakably demonstrated their aims by fighting for them for three years. The United Nations had come to exactly that conclusion in the case of Indonesia, and the negotiations held under United Nations auspices in that case had proceeded on the understanding that Indonesia would be completely independent.

37. It ill became France to assert that Algeria was less advanced than Morocco and Tunisia—which had already been given their independence—when Algeria had been a province of metropolitan France since 1848 and had therefore presumably enjoyed greater privileges and freedoms than the neighbouring countries. To deny that Algeria was as advanced politically as its neighbours was to admit that the French mission in Algeria had failed.

38. It had also been said that if the principle of self-determination were to be carried out in Algeria it might lead to the splitting of the country into two separate self-governing units, one made up of the indigenous Algerians and the other of the French colonists. But there was not the slightest doubt that Algeria must be regarded as a single entity and that a dismemberment like the one suggested would only cause it grievous harm. A foreign minority had never yet been given the right of self-determination in respect of a part of single territory: Algeria's freedom must be shared by all who made it their home.

39. The French representative had referred to the rivalry between two groups of Algerian nationalists. But whatever differences those two groups might have, both had only one aim, which was the independence of Algeria. He had also referred at length to the role of communism in the Algerian national movement. It was not strange that such a movement should embrace all the parties and ideologies of the country; the phenomenon had occurred in other parts of the world. The surest way of increasing the danger of communist infiltration into such national liberation movements was to deny them the goal for which they were striving.

40. The time had come for constructive thought and practical statesmanship with regard to the Algerian problem. His delegation did not condone the acts of terrorism which had no doubt been perpetrated in Algeria. But it must be understood that terrorism was merely the symptom of a disease and that the disease could not be cured by treating the symptom. In the case of Algeria, the disease was a considered determination to achieve freedom, and only France could apply the remedy. A strong and free Algeria in a North African federation, perhaps freely associated with France, would be of considerable value in stabilizing the dangerously unbalanced situation in the entire region and might be a step in the development of an association like the British Commonwealth of Nations to which Ceylon belonged, all of whose members were equal partners, independent and sovereign but bound together by ties of mutual interest and understanding.

41. It would be fatal to international understanding if Western solidarity should stand in the way of an equitable solution to the problem. He therefore appealed to the allies of France to use their good offices in the cause of peace, and to all Members to consider the Algerian question in isolation from the world conflict of ideologies.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.