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Chairman: Mr. Franz MATSCH (Austria).

**AGENDA ITEM 59**

**Question of Algeria (A/4140, A/C.1/L.246) (continued)**

**GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF THE  
DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/C.1/L.246) (continued)**

1. Mr. RIFA'I (Jordan) said that, while its Charter required the United Nations to avert war, in working towards that goal it had the primary responsibility of safeguarding the principles of right and justice, on which peace must be based. The Algerian war had come about because war had been the only course left to the Algerians for regaining independence and basic human rights; it had gained in momentum over the years and taken a heavy toll in human life and financial resources.

2. The United Nations had the responsibility, first, to maintain international peace and security and to bring about a just and peaceful settlement of international disputes; secondly, to safeguard the principle of self-determination and to secure the exercise of that right by the Algerian people; and thirdly, to end bloodshed on Algerian soil, bearing in mind the fact that the present tragedy had resulted from the absence of right and justice.

3. Since peace was conditioned by the establishment of right, discussions of restoring peace to Algeria should be focused on the means of establishing right in that country. It was to the credit of President de Gaulle of France that he had recognized the right of self-determination for the people of Algeria. He had committed himself to the unqualified recognition of that right when stating that the future of Algerians rested with Algerians, but he had hedged that commitment about with reservations which could only serve to obstruct the implementation of self-determination.

4. First, the free choice of the Algerians had been subordinated to endorsement by the French people, which suggested that the issue was a domestic one which concerned all French people. Such a position was surely a negation of self-determination particularly as, if the Algerians chose separation from France, it was hard to envisage general French acceptance of that separation. Nor, in that event, could the personal leadership of the French President, however influential, be an adequate safeguard against adverse developments.

5. Secondly, the French Government had put forward the question of a cease-fire as a precondition for a referendum. While agreeing with President de Gaulle that free elections could be held only in a peaceful atmosphere, and that the date of the elections should be decided upon at the appropriate time, the delegation of Jordan nevertheless felt that certain factors gave cause for concern. Among them was the matter of the preparations which had to be completed before universal suffrage could be exercised. President de Gaulle had rightly indicated that the ensuing period would have to be devoted to resuming normal existence, to releasing prisoners, permitting the return of exiles, and similar measures, but no mention had been made of the role which French troops in Algeria might play during the period contemplated. Similar reticence was maintained concerning the activities of the French colonial administration in Algeria and the methods used by the French settlers to safeguard their own interests. Any preparations for the establishment of peaceful conditions for a free plebiscite should include measures to prevent French pressure in Algeria. Far from giving any assurance in that respect, the French Prime Minister had stated that, as only France could conduct elections on French land, the French Army would be present and the Delegate General of the French Government in Algeria would ensure respect for the orders given by the Chief of State.

6. The problem was not merely to achieve a cease-fire, but to agree on the means of establishing right so as to ensure both a cease-fire and a peaceful future. Therefore, a discussion of the political future of Algeria should either precede or be held concurrently with any discussion of a cease-fire. After six years of revolution the Algerians could not be expected to lay down their arms and surrender to the unknown.

7. President de Gaulle had indicated that the elections might be held four years at the latest after the restoration of peace, once a situation had been established whereby not more than 200 persons a year would lose their lives. However fair that might be, there was still no certainty that subversive French elements in Algeria, with an interest in delaying the elections and aggravating the situation, might not seek to maintain the number of deaths at the requisite level—particularly since the figures quoted by the President of France in his press conference showed that the number of deaths of Algerians greatly outnumbered French deaths.

8. Self-determination seemed to the French an undesirable necessity rather than a legitimate right and was presented in a discouraging light. The French statement pointed out that the poverty-stricken Algerian population would have difficulty in becoming self-supporting, and that its élite would require training and its resources developing. It was surprising that those facts had not occurred to France

during its 129 years of occupation. If Algeria was such an economic and financial burden to France as the statement suggested, it was strange that France should go to the trouble and expense of remaining in Algeria. On the other hand the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of Algeria had stated that in the future Algeria would be well able to mobilize all its energies against the forces of colonial domination and racial segregation.

9. It was equally significant to compare the French statement to the effect that those Algerians who wished to remain French would be subject, if necessary, to regrouping and resettlement, with the statement of the Provisional Government of Algeria which affirmed the national entity and sociological unity of the Algerian people. The latter statement made it clear that any application of self-determination which failed to take account of those realities would be delusive and that any attempt at partition would be opposed. The Arab world had suffered one partition imposed by foreign aggression and would not be willing to submit to another.

10. As for the proposal to utilize the oil of the Sahara for the benefit of the Western world, there was reason to wonder why that wealth should not go to the inhabitants of Algeria, especially as the French President admitted that the majority of Algerians were impoverished.

11. Unfortunately, the French Government had reacted unfavourably to the Algerian Provisional Government's proposal to initiate "pourparlers" between the French Government and five of its own leaders on the grounds that the Algerian nominees were under arrest in France. The French Government might well demonstrate the sincerity of the promises contained in its declaration by freeing those political prisoners and holding preparatory talks with them. Preliminary contacts to restore mutual confidence were essential, and there were many historical instances of similar contacts between the contested power and leaders who happened to be in exile or prison. The five Algerian representatives had, before their arrest, been delegated by the National Liberation Front (FLN) to participate in the discussions held in Tunisia for the peaceful settlement of the Algerian question. The point to consider was not whether those leaders had been imprisoned but what effect their views would have on the outcome of the discussion. The question of how to initiate discussions should not overrule the urgent need for holding them, and the sooner the two parties met, the easier it would be to avoid further tragedies. It was to be hoped therefore that the courage, wisdom and far-sightedness which characterized the new French policy would facilitate the settlement of that major issue.

12. Concerning President de Gaulle's statement that there had never been any Algerian unity, far less sovereignty, the delegation of Jordan wished to point out that in recent times many States had been established which had never enjoyed sovereign statehood within their present boundaries. A number of Arab States, including Jordan, had been in that category. Algeria was an integral part of the Arab world and would eventually emerge as an independent and sovereign Arab State. Its future could not lie in France as it was bound irrevocably by bonds of culture, language, history and civilization to the Arab world as a whole. Moreover, it had been amply proved that,

before the French invasion in 1830, Algeria had existed as a separate entity with its own national character.

13. The Jordan delegation hoped for a speedy agreement between the two parties to the conflict and believed that the United Nations could play a constructive part. Certain delegations had stated that the Committee, out of wisdom and prudence, should avoid adopting a draft resolution which might prejudice a solution of the Algerian problem. That suggestion, if adopted, might establish a dangerous precedent. At previous sessions the same delegations had objected to any discussion of the Algerian question on the grounds that it might make it difficult for France to reach an understanding with Algeria, but the stand taken by the United Nations had proved the contrary. By adopting a constructive draft resolution the Committee could make a positive contribution towards a settlement of the Algerian problem. Jordan had joined twenty other delegations in submitting a draft resolution (A/C.1/L.246) which it believed would help the two parties rather than hinder them. It considered that the Committee would show both wisdom and prudence in adopting it.

14. Mr. COOPER (Liberia) said that the colonial Powers should have realized much earlier that the dependent peoples were as determined to fight for their freedom and independence as the colonial Powers themselves had been in the two world wars. It was encouraging that those Powers had begun to recognize that the right of self-determination was inalienable and could be neither bestow upon nor withheld from one people by another.

15. Although earlier French recognition of the Algerians' right to self-determination could have spared both parties much suffering, President de Gaulle was to be praised for his recent pronouncement on the matter, as were the Algerian nationalist leaders for the manner in which they had kept their country's claim to that right alive. Negotiations on a cease-fire must deal, not only with the conditions for ending hostilities, but also with political guarantees to ensure that Algeria was permitted to exercise its right to self-determination in a freely conducted referendum in which all could participate. The Algerian National Liberation Army was not a defeated army to which it was possible to dictate terms; while it might not represent the entire Algerian people, the aims for which it was fighting—self-determination and independence—were unquestionably supported by all Algerians. President de Gaulle's invitation to the Provisional Government to send negotiators to Paris was gratifying; at the same time, it was understandable that the Algerian leaders should continue to feel some misgivings in view of the statements by the French Prime Minister and other French political figures suggesting that France intended to maintain its sovereignty over Algeria.

16. France was not justified in rejecting the representatives proposed by the Algerian Provisional Government on the ground that, since they were in detention, they were out of touch with the current situation in Algeria; as other representatives had pointed out, there had been many cases in the past in which nationalist leaders had been brought directly from prison to the conference table. Ahmed Ben Bella in particular, as the original leader of the FLN, was entitled to take part in any negotiations. It was

to be hoped that, in the interests of peace, a compromise would be found on the question of representation.

17. While it was clearly the French Government's duty to see that the rights of the French minority in Algeria were fully protected, it must not do so at the expense of the indigenous majority. If any difficulties arose in future negotiations, it was to be hoped that the parties concerned would utilize the good offices of friendly States and of the United Nations; the Tunisian and Moroccan Governments had already expressed their willingness to assist in that regard.

18. The most realistic course would be for the Algerians to accept the status of a self-governing State within the French Community for a period during which the transfer of the civil administration could be completed under United Nations supervision. Unless both parties showed moderation, the war would continue with victory for neither.

19. In the light of the foregoing considerations his delegation had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

20. Mr. ROA (Cuba) said that the world was in a critical period of drastic change characterized by a struggle for freedom and a search for new forms of political organization, by the decline of imperialism and the resurgence of nationalism, and by the growing consciousness on the part of peoples long held in subjugation that they could shape their own destiny however costly the process. Cuba had learned from experience that absolute independence was a fiction in an interdependent world, but it was also aware of the real implications of dependence. Consequently, it proclaimed its inalienable right to establish its own democratic forms of political expression and of economic and cultural understanding as well as the right to share in the duties and responsibilities of the international community. It interpreted the exercise of those rights as a means of creating the mutual understanding and respect between nations essential for peace. In defending those rights, the small and weak countries of the world were in fact ensuring, not only their own survival, but the survival of all peoples.

21. The Revolutionary Government of Cuba, recognizing the marked similarity between the needs and aspirations of its own people and the peoples of Asia and Africa, felt closely bound to the African-Asian community and wished to contribute effectively to a lasting understanding between that community and the countries of the West. That objective had motivated the Cuban delegation in intervening in the debate on Algeria.

22. The Government of Cuba, interpreting the spirit of the revolution which had restored to the Cuban people the full exercise of freedom, strongly supported the independence of Algeria. An independent Algeria was important not only to the Algerians, but particularly to those countries which had only recently won their freedom; it was essential in strengthening international co-operation. France would have the most to gain from granting Algeria independence, and it was an irony of history that Algerian guerrillas rather than French soldiers should now be fighting for the ideals of the French Revolution.

23. Certain representatives of the Press had maliciously distorted the true nature of the Algerian revolution just as they had that of the Cuban revo-

lution, but they had succeeded in deceiving nobody: the right of the Algerian people to self-determination had finally been recognized by France and by the whole world. Formal recognition of that right by President de Gaulle held out hope of a democratic solution in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The acknowledgement of President de Gaulle's gesture by the Provisional Government and the agreement between the parties that a cease-fire should first be arranged were encouraging signs; however, the two sides had now reached an impasse and the war in Algeria continued.

24. In assessing responsibility for the deadlock, it should be recalled that France inevitably viewed the situation from the point of view of a colonial Power, while the Provisional Government's wariness was the reflection of the cause of the conflict and a legitimate reaction to past events in Algeria. During the century and more of French hegemony in Algeria, a colonial régime of the crudest type had flourished under which a French minority—now representing approximately 12 per cent of the population—had exploited the indigenous inhabitants. Those inhabitants, 86 per cent of the present population, were mainly labourers with an extremely low standard of living; it was therefore not surprising that they should choose to fight for a better life. It would also be recalled that the Government of Free France had been established in Algeria and that many Algerians had given their lives to uphold the then revolutionary principles of General de Gaulle. However, Free France, in its moment of triumph, had not recognized that sacrifice and had maintained Algeria under the old domination by French settlers and under an administration which continued to countenance electoral corruption for the benefit of metropolitan interests.

25. France's refusal to allow the Algerians equal participation in the wealth and development of their country had finally brought about the war which had cost countless lives since 1954. There could be no military victory for either side; the Algerian people had staked everything in their struggle and they would not yield until death. That had been the experience of Cuba during the past century and in the years that followed Fidel Castro's assumption of the leadership of the liberation movement. Recognizing the futility of seeking to resolve the conflict by military means, President de Gaulle had proposed a democratic settlement, but he had clearly indicated that France basically supported only one of the three alternatives offered, namely, the integration of Algeria with France; he had warned that independence would bring about chaos and lead to a communist dictatorship—a view already discredited; he had implied a possible partition of Algeria on the basis of a territorial regrouping of French settlers and pro-French Algerians who would control industry and the Sahara oil resources; finally, the form of autonomy within the French Community which he had described would be tantamount to integration with France. In offering his plan to the Algerians as "individuals", President de Gaulle had sought to deny recognition of the Provisional Government and the National Liberation Army as genuine representatives of the Algerian people. The argument was as specious as the contention that Fidel Castro and his liberation army had not represented the Cuban people. In fact, the Provisional Government and the National Liberation Army were the authentic expression of the will of

the Algerian people, and Cuba offered a tribute to the Algerian guerrillas who refused to surrender to the French. President de Gaulle should accept the legitimate and wholly justifiable conditions put forward by the Provisional Government for entering into negotiations.

26. France could not disregard the emergence of the peoples of Africa and Asia into modern history and the role that Western colonial domination had played in their reawakening and in developing the spirit of separatism. The peoples of those continents were determined to shape their own future and were debating their rights with the imperialist Powers as equals. The impact of that significant change in the historical process had been evident from the reaction of world opinion to the African-Asian Conference, held at Bandung in 1955. However, the political, social and economic cohesiveness of the newly independent former colonial countries was threatened by under-development and economic backwardness. Economic under-development was the greatest foe of social stability and the exercise of national democracy and a breeding ground for extremist movements as well as a base of operations for foreign monopolies.

27. The under-developed nations of Asia and Africa which had recently regained their freedom had been systematically drained of their resources by the great Powers. An independent Algeria would eventually become one of their number. All those countries should join with the under-developed countries of Latin America to examine their common problems and endeavour to resolve them. There was a great need for co-ordinated national economic programmes, assisted by international financing, to promote the development of those countries and to eradicate the social conditions which gave rise to unemployment, ignorance, want, despotism and foreign intervention.

28. On behalf of the Revolutionary Government of Cuba, he proposed that a conference of under-developed countries should be convened at Havana at an early date, and for that purpose, he requested the technical assistance of the United Nations Secretariat and of the specialized agencies. The invitation would be formally extended to each of the Governments concerned.

29. Cuba believed in peace based on national self-determination, economic co-operation, observance of human rights, social justice, international disarmament and the peaceful use of atomic energy. It further believed that the future of mankind depended in large measure on the full development of the under-developed peoples. It would do its best to further those ends.

30. Mr. SOBOLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that a peaceful and just settlement of the Algerian question was a particularly urgent necessity at the present time, when extensive efforts were being made to relax international tension. The Soviet Union continued, as before, to support all peoples that were struggling against colonialism for independence and national freedom. Experience had demonstrated that the Algerian problem could not be solved by force, but only by the recognition of the Algerian people's right to self-determination, which would lead to a new relationship between France and Algeria acceptable to both sides and based on equal rights. Support for a just, peaceful and democratic solution of the Algerian question had been expressed by a majority of the members of the United Nations and by the participants in the Bandung Conference and the Conferences of Independent African States, held at Accra in 1958 and at Monrovia in 1959.

31. The current debate on the Algerian question was taking place at a time when genuine prospects existed for a settlement. President de Gaulle had proposed that the Algerian people should exercise its right to self-determination by means of a general referendum, and the Algerian side had responded favourably and expressed willingness to enter into negotiations with France. President de Gaulle's proposal could make an important contribution to a solution of the Algerian problem if it was reinforced by concrete measures which took into account the interests of both parties while recognizing the right of the Algerian people to free and independent development.

32. The present international situation presented genuine possibilities for a peaceful and just solution of the Algerian problem. It was the duty of the United Nations to contribute in every possible way to such a solution and his delegation would support any proposal designed to achieve that end.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.