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Chairman: Mr. Victor A. BELAUNDE (Peru).

AGENDA ITEM 62

Question of Algeria (A/3197) (*continued*)

1. Mr. ZEINEDDINE (Syria), continuing his statement from the previous meeting, said that the Algerian liberation movement actually dated from the beginning of the French occupation. For a century and a quarter, the movement had shown unconquerable tenacity in the face of constant oppression. Over the years it had given proof of a capacity for organization rarely surpassed in the modern world. Its activity had increased to such an extent that at the present time it could be considered practically irreversible. It had been particularly active during the first eighteen years after 1830, when it had been founded, and from 1870 to 1872. In the past, it had had renowned leaders such as Abd-el-Kader among many others, and although active resistance had been intermittent, passive resistance had never ceased. Today the liberation movement had become a mass movement thanks to reorganization over the last twenty-five years, and particularly since 1945. The pioneer in that development had been the North African Star association, founded in 1925. That association, which demanded the independence of Arab North Africa, had been dissolved in 1937; subsequently, the Algerians had replaced it by the Algerian People's Party. Whatever the French representative might think, the North African Star had not been a communist party, but had maintained close relations with members of French political parties, the Socialist Party, for example. The Algerian People's Party had been officially dissolved in 1939, two years after its formation, and had then begun its underground activity. In 1947, when the Algerian liberation movement reappeared on the political scene, it was led by the Organization for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties. The measures taken by France in 1945, leading to the massacre of 45,000 Algerians in one week, precipitated the development of the movement; it organized a semi-permanent army which took the name "The Special Order". Gradually, the movement adapted its methods to the circumstances created by French imperialism, which seemed ready to resort to brute force to solve any problem.

2. The revolt had broken out on 1 November 1954, one week after the French Minister of the Interior had officially announced his satisfaction that the situation in Algeria was calm.

3. The liberation movement immediately received the support of numerous Algerian organizations, such as the trade unions, the Algerian Commerce Association,

and the Algerian Moslem Students' Union. The movement showed no sign of Communist tendencies. The political forces in Algeria were not unified. The French representative was wrong in claiming that there was dissension among the different groups or that the independence movement did not represent the Algerian people. The fact that some Algerians preferred to play the part of "collaborators" with France did not alter the truth of that statement.

4. With respect to the elections proposed by the French Government, past experience had shown that the Arabs had every reason to be mistrustful. The Algerian movement itself was formed on a democratic basis and had every intention of living up to its watchword: independence, union and progress. In fact, its power as a democratic organization came from the people. That power was vested in an elected committee by a hierarchic chain which started in the village and town precinct.

5. It was readily understandable that France's chief purpose in describing the Algerian movement as a Communist movement was to cause it to lose credit with certain delegations. From a practical point of view, it was not a bad thing for a country to acquire a "red tinge", since without it certain States might not be interested in what was happening in Africa or Asia. In actual fact, however, the Algerian movement was a purely patriotic and democratic one.

6. As to the Algerian Communist Party, it was under the influence of the French Communist Party, which directed it from Paris. The statement by the French representative that a French officer named Maillot had furnished arms to the Algerians did not of itself prove that they took orders from the Communist Party, for it was certain that a large part of the arms possessed by the movement at that time had come from French stores through one channel or another.

7. The structure of the movement consisted of a National Council of the Algerian Revolution, with seventeen members, which directed the movement. Besides that supreme body, there was a Co-ordination Committee, the executive body of the movement, which acted in accordance with the general policy set by the Council. The names of the members and the meeting-place of the Committee were confidential. However, contrary to what the French representative had said, none of the five Algerian leaders arrested by the French had belonged to that Committee, and Mr. Ben Bella was only a kind of military attaché for the movement outside. Moreover, the Committee did not function in Cairo but in Algeria. The movement had gradually organized an army which at the present time was able to hold in check half a million French soldiers as well as 100,000 armed residents. It was composed of groups split up into sections, the sections in turn being organized into successively larger units making up a sectional division, which was directed by the central headquarters of the movement. The most important

unit in the army was the volunteer, who was ready to sacrifice his life in the cause of truth and justice. So far, the army had enrolled only one-tenth of the volunteers who had come forward. It was a fact that some of them came from France, where they had settled and received military training in the French Army. The movement also had a civil administration for the liberated parts of the country.

8. The Algerian Government had not yet been officially recognized by any State, but in fact such a Government was virtually in existence and its official recognition might be announced by some States if the French continued to deny Algeria's right to independence. The existing situation was that France had ceased to govern Algeria—the French residents were ruling by means of the French administrative machinery, while the Algerian liberation movement was administering the liberated territories itself. Thus France could not be said to have lost a right which legally it had not possessed, and although, like any other delegation, France had the right to discuss the Algerian situation in the General Assembly, it should be remembered that it could no longer carry out any political programme in Algeria because of the simultaneous opposition of the Arabs and the residents.

9. The facts about the Algerian liberation movement could be summed up as follows: It was a mass movement. It was an organized movement with a party, a system of civil administration and fighting forces. It was composed of volunteers who were prepared to sacrifice their lives. The volunteers enrolled up to the present did not amount to more than 10 per cent of those who had come forward. It was recognized as the legitimate power in Algeria, not only by the great majority of the Algerian people, but also by many States and international conferences; France itself had recognized its authority by negotiating with its representatives. It was democratic in its purpose and organization. The movement was such that it could not be changed by French declarations or French pressure. France should realize that it was futile to try to regain Algeria and that, even if it should succeed in pacifying the country, the result would only be temporary.

10. At the present time, France felt that it could pursue its policy in North Africa with the help it was getting from other countries. Assuming that the Algerian movement was receiving outside help, France was receiving much more help from the United States. The donor country probably did not want its help to be utilized in that way, but it was nonetheless an established fact that it was being thus used. Moreover, side by side with financial aid there was political and military assistance. The support France would receive in the First Committee from the colonial Powers, and the fact that French security in Europe was ensured by other armies, thus freeing the French Army for action in Algeria, were valuable assets to France.

11. If France wanted to remain a great Power on terms of friendship with the Arabs, the Arabs would certainly appreciate it. But France would not win the friendship of the Arabs by concentrating troops in Cyprus, bombing Cairo, allying itself with the Zionists and indulging in repression in North Africa. A country could only become great as a result of the friendship it inspired.

12. What could the United Nations do to help seek a solution of the Algerian problem? On the one hand, France appeared incapable of compromising; it did

not even want to accept United Nations intervention and was trying to deal with the problem unilaterally. On the other hand, there was no denying that the only practical and legitimate objective to be attained was to ensure for the Algerians a free national life of their own, i.e., their independence, while at the same time protecting the interests of the residents. The residents would be allowed to become Algerians if they wished or they could remain Frenchmen and continue to live in Algeria, but without enjoying political rights. That objective should be attained gradually by a procedure along the following lines. First, France should recognize the right of the Algerians to self-determination and independence. Secondly, a provisional Algerian Government should be formed which would have the responsibility: in the first place, to enter into negotiations with France on behalf of Algeria, the negotiations to be conducted in an atmosphere where some kind of international supervision would be exercised; in the second place, to convene a constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage; and in the third place, concurrently with the establishment of a provisional Government, to order a cease-fire and release all prisoners. All acts of repression and resistance would cease as soon as the provisional Government was formed and Algeria's right to independence was recognized. Thirdly, after the Algerian Assembly was convened, the question of establishing lasting and reciprocal contractual relations with France would be considered. Of course, the Algerian Assembly would have to incorporate in its constitution provisions for safeguarding the interests and rights of the residents.

13. Such a procedure implied an understanding between the French Government and the Algerian liberation movement. That understanding could be reached directly or indirectly through talks and negotiations such as those held in the past year, for example. Mediation by the Secretary-General of the United Nations or by Member States which enjoyed friendly relations with France and Algeria might be useful. It was a well-known fact that the Algerian liberation movement was prepared to negotiate on such a basis. The difficulty came from the French, who were persisting in a strict colonial policy.

14. Acting within the framework of the Charter, the United Nations could play a very valuable part. It could recommend negotiations and decide on what basis they should be held; it could recommend an investigation of the situation in Algeria, which had created a state of international tension; it could set up a committee of good offices; it could also send observers, or dispatch an international force; and it could recommend mediation and the withdrawal of the fighting forces.

15. What mattered at the moment was not so much what the United Nations could do under the terms of the Charter as how far the Members of the United Nations were prepared to act. In any event, the United Nations could not be indifferent towards the only hot war being waged at present; nor could it fall in with the wishes of the representative of France and cease to act as a council of nations designed to harmonize international relations.

16. Like other delegations, the Syrian delegation was desirous of helping to find an objective solution of the Algerian problem, and therefore planned to submit a draft resolution which would offer France and Algeria the assistance which both countries had a right to expect from the United Nations.

17. U PE KIN (Burma) recalled that the rebellion against French rule had broken out in Algeria on 1 November 1954. On 26 July 1955, the representatives of thirteen States, including Burma, had requested that the question of Algeria be included in the agenda of the tenth session of the General Assembly (A/2924). It was a pity that the problem had not been considered at the tenth session. It would have been better if the item had not been deleted from the agenda, because now nearly a year later, the United Nations had to deal with it in a more disturbed atmosphere.

18. According to information from generally well-informed sources, the rebellion was now country-wide and fear had become the background to daily existence. The French had allegedly mobilized 500,000 soldiers to be used against 30,000 fighters of the National Liberation Front, assisted by 200,000 partisans.

19. The Government and the people of Burma felt a special interest in the question of Algeria because Burmese history was in some respects similar to that of Algeria. Progressively from 1826, Burma had begun to lose its independence, losing it completely in 1886. Nevertheless, peaceful negotiations between Burma and the United Kingdom had led to Burma's regaining its independence on 4 January 1948. Since then, it had improved its friendship with the United Kingdom, while at the same time profiting by the experience it had acquired under British rule. In that connexion, it should be noted that a large section of the Burmese people now wanted English to be taught in the elementary schools as a second language.

20. Despite what the representative of France had said, Algeria had been an independent country until it was conquered in 1830. It was not until 1870 that Algeria effected the transition from a military administration to the French colonial administration. Thus, Algeria, like Burma, had lost its independence in the middle of the 19th century, but whereas Burma had regained some measure of home rule in 1923 and 1937, it was not until 1947 that the three Departments of Algeria had been endowed with legal personality, financial autonomy and their own particular form of organization.

21. Under the French Constitution of 1946, Algeria became a member of the French Union. It was clear that if the Union had promoted the development of self-government and independence as the British Commonwealth had, for example, there would be no need to discuss the question of Algeria at present. Unfortunately, that progress towards democracy to which the French nation itself had contributed so much in former centuries, had not taken place. The representative of France confirmed the fact when he stated at the 831st meeting that, after 126 years of French rule in Algeria, there would be ruin and anarchy if the French now left Algeria.

22. The 10 million Algerians were divided into two hostile camps: the Arabs and Berbers, and the French settlers, the proportion being eight of the former to one of the latter. No doubt many of the French residents in Algeria had been settled there for several generations. However, the fact that the French had the same number of representatives as the indigenous population, despite the numerical difference between the two groups, and that the indigenous people were therefore considered second-class citizens, explained why the Algerian liberation movement was a genuine nationalist movement aimed at securing for the Algerians a

position of equality among the peoples and nations of the world.

23. The French Act of 16 March 1956 has been designed to introduce certain administrative reforms and to effect economic and social improvements in Algeria. Those reforms, unfortunately, had been too little and had come too late. They ignored the heart of the matter, namely the peaceful acquisition by Algeria of the right to independence.

24. There was no question that the grant of independence to Morocco and Tunisia had simultaneously strengthened the ties of interdependence between those two States and France. Those ties, however, were likely to become less effective as Tunisians and Moroccans continued to witness the plight of their brothers in Algeria. Conversely, it was probable that if Algeria became independent it too would join in those vital relations between France and North Africa. Mr. Mollet, the Prime Minister of France, had stated on 9 March 1956 that France without Algeria would no longer be France. It might be more accurate to say that France with Algeria as it was at present would no longer be France. On 29 October 1956 Mr. Mollet had again stated that, once a cease-fire was in force, guarantees of absolute equality of citizenship would be given, a new Act would be passed reflecting Algeria's individual character within the French Union, and economic assistance would be granted to develop Algeria and raise its standard of living. There was, without question, much good in that declaration, but it did not answer the question whether the Algerians were to acquire the right of self-determination. If the French National Assembly recognized that right and negotiations were undertaken for its realization, there would be grounds for hope that hostilities might be brought to an end.

25. It should be possible for the French "presence" in the world—compounded of French literary and philosophical contributions of the seventeenth century, the political ideals of the eighteenth century, creative and artistic genius, and the wisdom that had led to the conclusion of agreements by France with India, Tunisia and Morocco—to make itself manifest in Algeria. If so, peace would soon be restored and France, through the exercise of goodwill, would remain in a pre-eminent position with regard to Algeria.

26. If good offices were regarded as useful, he was sure they would be available on request, particularly if the request was addressed to the United Nations, which would certainly be willing to lend its assistance. What was needed was a generous sign of Algeria's right to be free, in or out of association with France.

27. Mr. BOLAND (Ireland) considered that the problem of Algeria was one of the most difficult matters on the General Assembly's agenda. Passions had been aroused on both sides, and it was therefore essential that the discussion in the United Nations should not inflame them further.

28. The Irish delegation nevertheless considered that the question called for consideration. For all the French representative had said, the matter did not fall within the scope of Article 2, paragraph 7, of the United Nations Charter. States which, like Ireland, had once belonged to the domestic jurisdiction of some other nation could not be expected to accept an interpretation of Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter that would rule the United Nations incompetent to discuss any and every struggle for independence.

29. The Irish delegation's opinion that the United Nations should examine the Algerian question did

not stem solely from sympathy with the struggles of colonial peoples for independence. The question constituted a threat to world peace and to the freedom of nations. That became evident when the problem was considered in the context of relations between the Arab world and the West. The struggle in Algeria was clearly one of the factors tending to exacerbate relations between the Western Powers and the Arab States and, consequently, a lever in the hands of those who sought to precipitate the disintegration of the free world. In those circumstances, it was not surprising that the Communists of Algeria supported France's most extreme enemies among the nationalists and that the French Communist Party urged the immediate withdrawal of French forces from Algeria—a solution which it knew no French government could accept. In reality, the Communists did not desire any solution; they sought only to prolong the conflict in the hope of turning it to their personal advantage.

30. Furthermore, the Algerian question had implications beyond the sphere of relations between France and North Africa. It was arguable, for example, that the Suez dispute and relations between Egypt and the West would never have reached their present state of tension if the Algerian question had been settled. It followed that all States which had suffered in any degree by the Suez dispute had an interest in the speedy solution of the Algerian problem.

31. However, to say that the problem could suitably be discussed in the General Assembly did not mean that it could be solved there. It could be solved only through negotiations leading to an agreement between the French authorities and the leaders of the Algerian national movement. It would be futile to attempt to lay down the precise conditions for a settlement, because a settlement could not be reached through the debates and resolutions of the General Assembly, although the nature of the settlement was likely to be affected by the force of world opinion as expressed through its resolutions.

32. It was only too well known that world opinion as manifested in the Assembly's debates was by no means uniform in its effect on Member States. Some affected complete stolidity in the face of the Assembly's condemnation, whereas the free nations could not fail to be influenced by a United Nations recommendation. Not only was France such a country, but in view of the influence, the intellectual *rayonnement* it had exercised and still exercised throughout the world, it must note carefully every circumstance which might tend to limit or extend that *rayonnement* in the modern world. France's true friends hoped that if it had to choose between its territorial empire and its empire over the minds of men it would, in the long run, choose the latter. It had clearly gained prestige in granting independence to Morocco and Tunisia, and stood to gain further prestige by a settlement in Algeria.

33. That line of reasoning suggested that a debate might exert some influence on the course of events, but that the nature of that influence would depend upon the degree of moderation shown in the debate.

34. No one would dispute the fact that the French had manifest interests in Algeria, that they had done a great deal of constructive work in that country, and that France had a legitimate concern with the welfare of the large European minority there. The existence of that minority added to the difficulty of the problem, and because of that difficulty the matter needed urgent attention on the political and not merely on the military

plane. The French representative's statement that nationalism had no future (831st meeting) required serious qualification. Countries whose nationality was not disputed might be able to look beyond nationalism to wider forms of association. But countries whose nationality was denied could not do so; in such countries nationalism had a future. Some European nations, which had enjoyed many generations of freedom, were apt to frown upon the excesses of Arab nationalism. They forgot that nationalism was, in its origin, a European doctrine and had often exploded with terrible force. France itself had done a great deal to spread the idea of nationalism and should therefore come to terms with the force of nationalism even when directed against its own interests. It was true that there had been atrocities in Algeria. Atrocities on any side should be condemned, but it could not be forgotten that the excesses of nationalism were not peculiar to the Arab world. The French Revolution itself had given a political connotation to the word "terror", and European history had not been lacking in violence and fanaticism.

35. National uprisings could not be dealt with by repression or by unilateral and partial concessions, but only through negotiations which recognized the national character of the revolt, and which must be carried out with the leaders of the nationalist movement.

36. It might perhaps be pertinent to recall that after the First World War Ireland had reached independence through guerrilla warfare against the British forces. For years the Government in London had rejected any idea of negotiating with the rebel leaders, whom it had regarded as murderers. Nevertheless a treaty had been signed. A better treaty, which would have benefited both sides, could certainly have been signed if, at an earlier date, the Government of the United Kingdom had recognized Irish nationalism for what it was. That observation was equally applicable to relations between France and Algeria.

37. The Irish delegation, because of its sympathy with peoples struggling to be free, because of its traditional friendship with and admiration for France, and because of its anxiety lest the protracted struggle should promote the expansion of Soviet influence in that area of the world, earnestly desired negotiations leading to a peaceful settlement at the earliest possible date. The result would be immediately apparent: Algeria, on attaining its freedom would tighten its bonds of friendship with France in both the economic and the cultural spheres. Such a development would also enable France and Algeria to build a bridge between the Arab and Western worlds. Clearly, however, it was for France and Algeria, not the United Nations, to build that bridge. The General Assembly could do no more than encourage the men of goodwill in France and North Africa who were working for such a settlement. The main concern of the United Nations should be to make it known that the solution of the problem was in the interest not only of France and Algeria, but also of world peace.

38. Mr. SERRANO (Philippines) said that for two years an unnecessary and bitter struggle had been raging in Algeria, in which two opposing principles were involved. On the one hand, the Moslems wished to assert their right to determine their own destiny; on the other hand, France wished to preserve the unity of a State and to achieve a balance between the claims of the peoples composing that State. In such circumstances, a solution conducive to the establishment of an

enduring peace was obviously very difficult to find. However, war, and even victory in war, could clearly solve nothing. The situation plainly called for an immediate cease-fire, which would not only save lives, but might also avert disastrous consequences for the rest of North Africa. Tunisia and Morocco were understandably sympathetic to the Algerian nationalists, while at the same time wishing to preserve their ties with France. The dream of "independence within interdependence" had not been shattered, but its fulfilment had been seriously set back by the events in Algeria. In any case, it would remain the goal whose attainment would guarantee a stable peace in North Africa, while failure to achieve it might result in a continuing threat to the security not only of that area, but of the free world as well. Nor could it be overlooked that the conflict in Algeria might enable the agents of a certain ideology alien to North Africa to capture the leadership of the Algerian nationalist movement.

39. For those reasons, his delegation hoped that peace would soon be restored in Algeria. The United Nations could usefully assist both parties in the negotiation of a settlement. By tradition, the Philippines was opposed to colonialism of any sort. At the same time, it appreciated the French contribution in North Africa, and particularly the liberal French traditions which had helped to prepare the ground for Algerian aspirations to independence.

40. On both sides there appeared to be a desire to end the conflict and to start negotiations; in 1956 attempts had been made in that direction which, although abortive, might be renewed with greater success in the future. The United Nations could help to create the climate of confidence necessary for further progress.

41. His delegation suggested a number of measures which might be applied in stages: first, an immediate cease-fire; secondly, consultations between the French authorities and Algerian nationalist leaders with a view to the full restoration of peace in Algeria; thirdly, negotiations to prepare the ground for the holding of free elections in Algeria based on universal and equal suffrage for all Algerians—Moslem and French alike. The negotiations should have in view the immediate convening of a constituent assembly and the provision of guarantees for the rights of the French minority. The future status of Algeria should be such that the right of the Algerian people to self-determination would become effective at such time and under such conditions as was considered satisfactory by both parties.

42. His delegation considered that those suggestions struck a balance between principle and necessity. With goodwill on both sides, a solution could not fail to be found.

43. Mr. PINEAU (France) thanked the representatives of Burma, Ireland and the Philippines for the courtesy they had shown to France, although he could not agree with everything they had said.

44. Observing that the representative of Syria had made certain allegations in his statement (831st to 833rd meetings) which required refutation, he requested the Chairman give the floor at a later stage to Mr. Jacques Soustelle, who, after having made a thorough study of the statement of the representative of Syria, would correct some of the facts and figures therein.

45. The Syrian representative had said at the 831st meeting that the Dey of Algiers had never delegated his sovereignty to France. That was certainly true,

because the Dey of Algiers had not held sovereignty over Algeria before 1830. He had merely ruled over Algiers and its suburbs under the suzerainty of Turkey, whose Sultan had informed the French Government at the time that he had no intention of exercising his suzerainty over Algeria again.

46. The Syrian representative had also asserted at the same meeting that the United States had more or less recognized the sovereignty of Algeria before 1830. In that connexion, it was interesting to recall a remark made by President Theodore Roosevelt to Mr. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador, to the effect that, by conquering Algeria, France had relieved the United States of the obligation to pay an indemnity to the Regency of Algiers in order to avoid attacks on United States ships by pirates. The President had added that, by that act, France had also freed humanity from a relic of barbarism.

47. The Syrian representative had also referred on the same occasion to the French Constitution, asserting that the provisions relating to Algeria were not applicable. Mr. Zeineddine had apparently confused the issue; in his statement, the representative of France had spoken not of the provisions concerning the French Union, but of those relating to the integrity of French territory.

48. On one point, the representative of Syria had certainly been right: the solution of the Algerian problem could not be compared with that of any other problem, as the problem itself was essentially different from any other.

49. The Syrian representative had also affirmed at the 832nd meeting that France wished to separate the Berbers from the Arabs; yet, according to him, there was only one people in Algeria. If he had gone merely a few kilometres from Algiers, he would have found that the inhabitants of that region did not speak Arabic. He had added that his views were not based on a concept of race but on one of peoples. However, he had also said that he had intervened in the debate because the Syrians were an Arab people, which intended to achieve Arab unity.

50. That was indeed the crux of the matter. If France had to deal only with the Algerian people, a liberal solution would be easy to find, but if it were faced with an Arab conspiracy, it would have a much more difficult task. That was why France had on 25 October 1956 complained to the Security Council of foreign intervention in Algeria (S/3689).

51. Mr. ZEINEDDINE (Syria), having been accorded the right of reply, pointed out that in 1830 no Turkish Empire had existed, but only an Ottoman Empire, in which Turks, Arabs and Kurds had lived on a basis of equality. In Algeria the Sultan had wielded no more than a moral influence. Algeria itself, however, had existed as a national entity and had exercised its rights as a State; it had not been a Turkish colony.

52. The union between France and its Overseas Territories, as defined in the French Constitution of 1946, was not a true union, but merely a legal fiction. As for the Arabic language, there were dialects and local variants in Algeria, as elsewhere, but all Algerians spoke Arabic. It would be a mistake to regard the Arabs as a race, since they were of different origins; essentially they constituted a nation inspired by a desire for unity.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.