

Algeria

Negotiations to end the Algerian rebellion were attempted twice in 1961 but failed. French and Algerian National Liberation Front negotiators met first at Evian in France from May 20 to June 13. Talks were resumed on July 20 at Lugin near Evian but were broken off on July 26 at the request of the FLN. Agreement could not be reached on the Sahara, on the safeguards and guarantees to be given to non-Muslim Algerians, on the status of the future relationship between France and Algeria, and, on the Algerian side, on the problem of guarantees for self-determination. The negotiations, however, seemed to have brought closer the respective points of view and by the end of the year it was expected that a cease-fire agreement would be signed early in 1962.

At the request of a group of African and Asian member countries the question of Algeria was inscribed on the agenda of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly and allocated for consideration by the First Committee at its 1219th to 1227th meetings from December 14 to 19. Discussion centered on a draft resolution co-sponsored by 35 African and Asian delegations. Couched in much the same terms as the resolution adopted at the fifteenth session, the draft advocated self-determination and territorial integrity, and sought recognition of the responsibility of the United Nations to contribute towards this objective. The draft concluded with a call to the two parties to resume negotiations. However, a major change from last year's text was the attempt to specify that the "Provisional Algerian Government" was one of the two parties in question.

The negotiations and secret talks which were then thought to be taking place between the French and the Algerian National Liberation Front set the tone of the First Committee debate in which 59 delegations participated. Most African and Asian countries stressed the necessity of respecting the territorial integrity of Algeria, commented favourably on the guarantees offered to non-Muslim Algerians and urged that negotiations should progress. On the other hand, some Western delegations expressed the view that the draft resolution was contentious in that it endorsed the Algerian National Liberation Front's approach to the question and prejudged some of the issues in dispute. They also emphasized that at such a delicate stage in the negotiations it would be unwise for the General Assembly to approve such a resolution. In accordance with past practice France did not take part in the debate.

When the draft resolution was put to a vote by roll call in the First Committee on December 19, it was adopted by 61 to none, with 34 abstentions. The abstaining delegations were from Western Europe, North and South America (including Canada), the Commonwealth and French-speaking Africa. The resolution was subsequently approved in plenary without discussion on December 20 by a similar vote of 62 in favour, none against, with 38 abstentions.