

ALGERIA

The position in the First Committee, now discussing the Algerian item, is as follows:

(a) The list of speakers was closed this evening at which time a substantial number of names had been added. The Chairman announced that the Committee would hold three meetings on December 4 in order to complete the general debate on the item. As yet no draft resolution has been tabled.

(b) The African-Asian group have given tentative approval to the draft resolution contained in our telegram 2670 December 3. A working group of nine will seek the reactions of other delegations and report to the group early tomorrow afternoon. Lall of India has already indicated that he might accept "recommends discussion" instead of "calls for negotiations" in the operative paragraph. Lall hinted also that the fourth (self determination) paragraph of the preamble might be deleted if this would make the text acceptable to the French. Later, Loutfi of Egypt said he could accept "invites discussions" in the last operative paragraph. These changes, of course, would have to be accepted by the group.

(c) The representatives of Italy and Peru are contemplating a text which would reflect the position of France. The French are aware that this text would fail to win the necessary support in the Assembly.

(d) The representatives of Iran and Japan (and perhaps Thailand) have been working "in great secrecy" on a compromise. They have already produced drafts acceptable to France. They are no doubt thinking along the lines of their initiative last year but we have regretfully concluded that their activities at this session might have been premature. They are apparently considering an operative paragraph which would invite France to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by recent developments for reaching a peaceful solution to the Algerian question. To the French "recent developments" could mean the Loi Cadre and to the African-Asians, the offer of good offices by Tunisia and Morocco. The formula is ingenious but perhaps too much so to meet the current situation.

2. We have the impression that both the French and the Japanese have been surprised by the moderation expressed in the African-Asian draft resolution. We believe that the African-Asians are earnestly seeking a text which would have the widest possible support in the Assembly and which at the same time would cause minimum embarrassment to the French government. On its face the current text seems unobjectionable and we and others, including the USA and Norwegian delegations, might be hardpressed to find a suitable explanation for a vote against the draft resolution. The question arises whether we should try to persuade the French to accept the text or a modified version.

3. In their present mood the French delegation are unlikely to be accommodating and they might count on the Italian-Peruvian proposal and the initiative by Iran and Japan to save the day for them. It might be quite possible for the French in these circumstances and with the help of their NATO partners to defeat the African-Asian proposal by the process of a blocking third. However, this result might be neither helpful to the actual situation in Algeria nor beneficial to the long-term position of the Western Powers in Africa and Asia.

4. We have reported the Arab references to Spaak's remarks about the position of NATO as regards Algeria. We now know from NATO telegram 2162 December 3† that Spaak has been quoted out of context and that the interpretation given here is not well founded. We seriously doubt, however, that Spaak's remark could be effectively explained away by placing it in its context. Spaak's accompanying remarks, as quoted by Wilgress, do not readily lend themselves to effective application in debate here, and this would be particularly true if the NATO powers should find themselves voting consistently with France on the various proposals submitted.