



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
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TUNISIA

Statement by the Acting Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Paul Martin, made in the First Committee (Agenda Item No. 60)

In the view of the Canadian Delegation the question of Tunisia is a test of the capacity of the United Nations as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of common goals. Some countries question the very competence of this organization to examine the problem before us; on the other hand, a proposal has been put forward by a number of African and Asian States which would direct one country entrusted with responsibilities on behalf of a dependent people to orient its policies in a specific way. Given such divergent views, we must proceed with greater caution. It would be a great pity if, as a result of these discussions, the United Nations were to lose some of its prestige and moral authority; if the Administering Powers were to lose some of their zeal in the cause of helping non-self-governing territories attain their autonomy; and if the populations of those territories were to lose confidence in their future or acquire a false idea of the role of this organization.

There are special reasons why the Canadian Delegation should proceed with greatest care. In the first place, we know very little about Tunisia itself and must rely on second-hand information about conditions there. Disturbances have arisen recently in this area which, it seems to us, can only be explained in terms of political unrest. We know the irresistible strength - because we have felt it ourselves - of the urge for freedom which develops in all national groups still subject to external control. On the other hand, we know France well. The fact that our land was once called New France and that approximately one-third of our population today is of French descent establishes very close links between us. This natural friendship has been deepened and strengthened by our common participation in the defence of freedom in two World Wars. To us France is and will continue to be a bastion of freedom.

Article 73 of the Charter states that members of the United Nations which have responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government recognize the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount and accept the obligation to promote the well-being of the inhabitants of these territories. The ideals and obligations set out in Article 73 are conceived in the same spirit and directed to the same goal as the ideals and objectives which France has promised to fulfil in her constitution, the preamble of which reads in part