



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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NEW HOPE FOR ALGERIA

A statement on December 1 in the First Committee of the United Nations by Mr. Wallace Nesbitt, Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation

... As we have been already reminded in this debate, this is the fourth session of the General Assembly at which we have discussed the question of Algeria. As has also been pointed out, however, and particularly in the wise and statesmanlike declaration of the distinguished Representative of Tunisia, the conditions surrounding our debate at this session are radically different from those which existed at any time in the past. My Delegation considers that, since September 16 of this year, the character of this question has been completely changed and a totally new point of departure for its solution has been provided.

On that date, ... the President of France, General de Gaulle, issued a declaration in which he recognized the right of the Algerian people--and he specified that by this he meant the right of all the people of Algeria--to self-determination. In the name of France he committed himself to asking the Algerian people to make a free choice of one of three alternatives, secession from France, out-and-out identification with France, or a middle course of federation with France. He has promised that he will negotiate a cessation of hostilities with the combatants now engaged in the tragic conflict in Algeria, and that this cessation of hostilities will be followed--and I quote "at latest four years after the actual restoration of peace" unquote--by a free referendum whereby the people of Algeria will be able to decide for themselves their own future.

Now Canada has been familiar, ... ever since General de Gaulle made his famous Brazzaville declaration in 1944, with this enlightened approach to such problems as that of Algeria, and my Delegation considers that the policy he enunciated on September 16, and reiterated on November 10, is a further expression of his liberal views and intentions. We have every

confidence in President de Gaulle's intention to carry this policy through to completion and also in his ability to do so. We believe, therefore, that his declaration of September 16 affords the basis for a real movement towards the final solution and settlement of the dispute which has plagued Algeria for so long.. Indeed, we can already see signs in some quarters that this movement has begun, and we therefore hope and trust that full advantage will be taken of this encouraging situation at the earliest possible opportunity. Thus the way is open for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations on the Algerian people--aspirations ... which have attracted much sympathy and support, particularly in this forum where we are dedicated to the preservation of fundamental human liberties.

For this reason, ... the Canadian Delegation is very concerned--as, I am sure, are all members of the UN--for fear that some action, no matter how well-intentioned, might be taken which would hamper the chances of the peaceful solution to which President de Gaulles proposals have opened the way. I think it important to keep in mind that outside action whether by individual personalities or states or by the UN might not necessarily be helpful.

We recognize the sincere desire of many delegations participating in this debate to devise a formula which would give expression to the concern of the UN over the conflict in Algeria and which would serve to advance the achievement of its solution. Indeed, many of our friends are among those working towards the end. These include countries like Canada, which are often referred to as Middle powers, which have no vested interests in the problem of Algeria, and with whom the Canadian Delegation has been associated in the consideration of other items during this session. We appreciate the sincerity of their intention and we of course applaud their aim, but, viewing this problem as objectively as we can, we have serious doubts whether this is the way to approach the problem.

In the opinion of the Canadian Delegation, ... there is a very real possibility that specific action by the UN at this stage would not facilitate the achievement of a solution of the dispute in Algeria. The principles for a settlement in Algeria have been generally accepted as just and equitable, and the way is already being sought for negotiations which will lead to the application of these principles. It also seems to be generally accepted that nothing should be done which might cut across the current of these developments and hamper the realization of a solution. The statements which we have heard in the debate have unanimously echoed the concern of the international community that an end should come to this tragic struggle on a basis honourable to all concerned and giving Algeria the possibility of a hopeful and stable future.

We know that it is the habitual practice of his Committee to conclude our consideration of problems by crystallizing our views in a resolution. It occurs to me, however, ... that, when the exchange of views which we are now having draws to a close, we might well consider whether the best contribution which the UN can make to the settlement of the Algerian question is not to be found in the general expressions of concern and the encouragement to a solution which have been voiced here from all sides. If this view were generally accepted by the distinguished members of this Committee and of General Assembly, I do not think that it would be desirable for us to divide the Assembly by a vote which would undoubtedly hinder rather than facilitate the solution we all so earnestly desire. I should like to suggest that this is an occasion for self-restraint--for the UN, recognizing the indirect but very powerful influence which flows from our discussions here, to refrain from intervening at this delicate stage by way of a formal resolution.

S/C