

ALGERIAN OBJECTIVES

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“To destroy colonialism in Algeria is not only to emancipate a people, but to set Africa free and assure world peace”.—Ferhat Abbas, 27 January 1960.

EVER since the opening of negotiations between the French Government and the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (G.P.R.A.), agreement has stumbled over two issues, without which no cease-fire is possible—the territorial integrity of Algeria and the unity of its people.

The Algerian demand for the preservation of their territorial integrity is their demand for that very same Algeria which every French schoolchild has been taught to measure as extending from the frontiers of Mali and Niger to the Mediterranean Sea. Equally, despite their diversity of cultures and religions, the people of Algeria are one and indivisible. Whatever the decisions resulting from the negotiations between the French and Algerian leaders, they must and will apply to all Algerians.

The Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic has been unequivocal in insisting upon the establishment of these two principles. There is no room for manoeuvre, no possibility of an agreed cease-fire until they have been recognised.

The French seem to envisage Algeria as a country permanently composed of two separate and distinctive communities: the Algerian and the European. Further, they appear to feel that the interests of each are different and will inevitably be so forever. We maintain on the other hand that once Algeria is independent, these interests ought not, need not, to conflict. The French proposals to institutionalise the European minority, to separate it from the rest of the country by granting it separate structures and privileges, cannot but be a manifest source of disunity. Apart from the undemocratic character of the whole proposal, it would plant in any nation the dangers of stagnation, and inevitably, disintegration. The effect of such a proposal would be to separate Algeria into two sharply antagonistic groups, rearing segregation into a constitution. The Algerian people have not been fighting for seven years to rid themselves of colonialism only in order suddenly to somersault their way to its negotiated perpetuation.

The struggle in Algeria is essentially part of the struggle against colonial rule everywhere. It is neither a religious nor a racial war. There can therefore be no justification whatsoever for establishing the Europeans as a privileged minority, for attempting to stabilise the function that they have for so long performed as one of the primary instruments of French dominion in colonial Algeria.

It is its anti-colonial character which makes the nationalist war in Algeria a part of that greater African war for freedom from external domination. We recognise ourselves as Africans, measuring our own engagement upon the continental map. It is for this reason that we see the liberation of Angola and South West Africa as part of our own liberation. Algerian nationalism is not an isolated phenomenon restricted to the Algeria of the geography books. It is the nationalism too of the Africans in Angola and Mozambique, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Its tactics may differ from place to place, as the tactics of those who give it battle. Its objectives remain the same.

Algerian independence can only begin with its political freedom. For it to be complete, for us to turn the energy and enthusiasm of our people into the constructing of a new society, a total decolonisation must take place. One does not release a prisoner with his handcuffs locked round his wrists. Despite their paper independence, several African States are so bound and gagged, economically and politically, that their freedom is that of the greyhound with the muzzle round its mouth.

It is not difficult to lay down one's weapons. But to negotiate a peace takes clarity of purpose and an unflinching will. We do not deny that different groups possess different characters, and we have always expressed ourselves willing to respect the particular character of the European minority in Algeria—its religion, language, culture. What we will not surrender is our belief in a free and united Algerian people, single in all its multiplicity of features and faiths.

Our position is clear. Faced by it, the French government retreats behind the claim that we do not represent the Algerian people, though at the same time it requires us to enter into agreements which would bind the Algerian people. The French would do well to satisfy themselves and everyone else on just what they believe the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic to be. If they do not recognise us as the representatives of the Algerian people, they cannot expect us to negotiate

agreements in the name of Algeria. If they accept our right to negotiate, they must acknowledge also our right to represent.

The French stand over the Sahara is irrational and insupportable. The Sahara crosses many frontiers. Part of it is to be found in Mauritania, part of it in Mali, part of it in Niger and in Tchad. Only a year ago France consecrated these frontiers in its grant of independence. Is then the Algerian Sahara to be any different? History, geography and the French colonial administrators have equally established the frontiers of the Algerian Sahara. Sovereignty over the region is, of course, one thing; exploitation of the region is another. We are well enough aware that France has interests to preserve in the Sahara and elsewhere in Algeria, and we are eager to co-operate in developing and exploiting the wealth of the area with other nations. We wish to see the Sahara's immense resources serve not only Algeria but Africa itself, and we hope to arrive at an equitable arrangement, on a co-operative basis, to accomplish this.

Once Algeria is independent, we wish then, as one nation to other nations, to enter into negotiations and agreements. But we cannot today, while we are a people at war, negotiate with other countries on such issues. The exploitation of Saharan oil cannot be resolved while our hands hold guns to ensure our very survival. The precise frontiers of Algeria may have to be negotiated with our neighbours. We do not deny that some adjustments may be necessary. But such adjustments can only be resolved between sovereign powers, freely and without intimidation. Our needs and interests are the needs and interests as well of the people of Africa. Ours is a firm aspiration, to co-operate with other African States in accomplishing the rational development of the Sahara's resources.

Our long war for independence in Algeria has been the harshest of training grounds for our people, and these seven years have set in motion the enfranchisement that cannot end with signatures on a sheet of paper. The Algerian people are preparing themselves, with excitement and with faith, for that moment when they can turn their abilities to the decolonisation within. The long and difficult task will then commence to substitute for colonial structures an economic and political system capable of satisfying the basic needs of all belonging to it. Algerians have had their first taste of liberation. They will not be finally satisfied until among them and everywhere about them,

throughout the continent, that liberty is real and unthreatened.

Aware that such liberty is indivisible, we have—during the war itself—already committed ourselves. In joining the Casablanca group of States, we have established the basis for joint action among Africans. We have, in pursuit of our own struggle against foreign dominion, assisted in setting up a pan-African nucleus for future co-operation.

The Algerian identity is a manifold one. In addition to being African, we are also Arab and Mediterranean. We believe that this rich and varied cultural history is an asset in the shaping of tomorrow's Africa. As our struggle has been a symbol and an example for other African countries, we hope that the reconstruction of Algeria within the framework of our history will also benefit the continent. Algeria, and the North African federation of which it will be a part, must look to the other regions of Africa, observing their experiments and experiences so that we may learn from these and advance with them as far as possible.

Such are our objectives. They are the greater for being shared by peoples all over an Africa that is, since we are Africans, also our own.

