



July 2, 1957

**Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy in the Senate,
Washington, D.C., July 2, 1957**

Citation:

"Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy in the Senate, Washington, D.C., July 2, 1957", July 2, 1957, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers. Senate Files, Box 784, "Algeria Speech," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/united-states-senate-imperialism-19570702>. Contributed and annotated by Cyrus Schayegh. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/291040>

Summary:

On July 2, 1957, US senator John F. Kennedy made his perhaps best-known senatorial speech—on Algeria.

Home to about 8 million Muslims, 1.2 million European settlers, and 130,000 Jews, it was from October 1954 embroiled in what France dubbed “events”—domestic events, to be precise. Virtually all settlers and most metropolitan French saw Algeria as an indivisible part of France. Algeria had been integrated into metropolitan administrative structures in 1847, towards the end of a structurally if not intentionally genocidal pacification campaign; Algeria’s population dropped by half between 1830, when France invaded, and the early 1870s. Eighty years and many political turns later (see e.g. Messali Hadj’s 1927 speech in this collection), in 1954, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) launched a war for independence. Kennedy did not quite see eye to eye with the FLN.

As Kennedy's speech shows, he did not want France entirely out of North Africa. However, he had criticized French action already in early 1950s Indochina. And in 1957 he met with Abdelkader Chanderli (1915-1993), an unaccredited representative of the FLN at the United Nations in New York and in Washington, DC, and a linchpin of the FLN’s successful international offensive described in Matthew Connelly’s *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (2002). Thus, Kennedy supported the FLN’s demand for independence, which explains its very positive reaction to his speech.

And thus, unlike the 1952-1960 Republican administration of Dwight Eisenhower (1890-1969) that officially backed the views of NATO ally France and kept delivering arms, the Democratic senator diagnosed a “war” by “Western imperialism” that, together with if different from “Soviet imperialism,” is “the great enemy of ... the most powerful single force in the world today: ... man's eternal desire to be free and independent.” (In fact, Kennedy’s speech on the Algerian example of Western

imperialism was the first of two, the second concerning the Polish example of Soviet imperialism. On another, domestic note, to support African Algeria's independence was an attempt to woo civil-rights-movement-era African Americans without enraging white voters.) To be sure, Kennedy saw France as an ally, too. But France's war was tainting Washington too much, which helped Moscow. In Kennedy's eyes, to support the US Cold War against the Soviet Union meant granting Algeria independence. The official French line was the exact opposite: only continued French presence in Algeria could keep Moscow and its Egyptian puppet, President Gamal Abdel Nasser, from controlling the Mediterranean and encroaching on Africa.

Original Language:

English

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Transcript - English

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Mr. President, the most powerful single force in the world today is neither communism nor capitalism, neither the H-bomb nor the guided missile - it is man's eternal desire to be free and independent. The great enemy of that tremendous force of freedom is called, for want of a more precise term, imperialism - and today that means Soviet imperialism and, whether we like it or not, and though they are not to be equated, Western imperialism.

Thus the single most important test of American foreign policy today is how we meet the challenge of imperialism, what we do to further man's desire to be free. On this test more than any other, this Nation shall be critically judged by the uncommitted millions in Asia and Africa, and anxiously watched by the still hopeful lovers of freedom behind the Iron Curtain. If we fail to meet the challenge of either Soviet or Western imperialism, then no amount of foreign aid, no aggrandizement of armaments, no new pacts or doctrines or high-level conferences can prevent further setbacks to our course and to our security.

I am concerned today that we are failing to meet the challenge of imperialism - on both counts - and thus failing in our responsibilities to the free world. I propose, therefore, as the Senate and the Nation prepare to commemorate the 181st anniversary of man's noblest expression against political repression, to begin a two-part series of speeches, examining America's role in the continuing struggles for independence that strain today against the forces of imperialism within both the Soviet and Western worlds. My intention is to talk not of general principles, but of specific cases - to propose not partisan criticisms but what I hope will be constructive solutions.

There are many cases of the clash between independence and imperialism in the Soviet world that demand our attention. One, above all the rest, is critically outstanding today - Poland.

The Secretary of State, in his morning news conference, speaking on this subject, suggested that, if people want to do something about the examples of colonialism, they should consider such examples as Soviet-ruled Lithuania and the satellite countries of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and others.

I agree with him. For that reason, within 2 weeks I hope to speak upon an issue which I think stands above all the others; namely, the country of Poland.

There are many cases of the clash between independence and imperialism in the Western World that demand our attention. But again, one, above all the rest, is critically outstanding today - Algeria.

I shall speak this afternoon of our failures and of our future in Algeria and North Africa - and I shall speak of Poland in a later address to this body.

I. Algeria, France, and the United States

Mr. President, the war in Algeria confronts the United States with its most critical diplomatic impasse since the crisis in Indochina - and yet we have not only failed to meet the problem forthrightly and effectively, we have refused to even recognize that it is our problem at all. No issue poses a more difficult challenge to our foreign-policy makers - and no issue has been more woefully neglected. Though I am somewhat reluctant to undertake the kind of public review of this case which I had hoped - when I first began an intensive study of the problem 15 months ago - that the State Department might provide to the Congress and people, the Senate is, in my opinion, entitled to receive the answers to the basic questions involved in this crisis.

I am even more reluctant to appear critical of our oldest and first ally, whose assistance in our own war for independence will never be forgotten and whose role in the course of world events has traditionally been one of constructive leadership and cooperation. I do not want our policy to be anti-French any more than I want it to be antinationalist - and I am convinced that growing numbers of the French people, whose patience and endurance we must all salute, are coming to realize that the views expressed in this speech are, in the long run, in their own best interest.

I say nothing today that has not been said by responsible leaders of French opinion and by a growing number of the French people themselves.

Is Algeria of Concern to the United States?

American and French diplomats, it must be noted at the outset, have joined in saying for several years that Algeria is not even a proper subject for American foreign policy debates or world consideration – that it is wholly a matter of internal French concern, a provincial uprising, a crisis which will respond satisfactorily to local anesthesia. But whatever the original truth of these cliché

s may have been, the blunt facts of the matter today are that the changing face of African nationalism, and the ever-widening by-products of the growing crisis, have made Algeria a matter of international, and consequently American, concern.

The war in Algeria, engaging more than 400,000 French soldiers, has stripped the continental forces of NATO to the bone. It has dimmed Western hopes for a European common market, and seriously compromised the liberalizing reforms of OEEC, by causing France to impose new import restrictions under a wartime economy. It has repeatedly been appealed for discussion to the United Nations, where our equivocal remarks and opposition to its consideration have damaged our leadership and prestige in that body. It has undermined our relations with Tunisia and Morocco, who naturally have a sense of common cause with the aims of Algerian leaders, and who have felt proper grievance that our economic and military base settlements have heretofore required clearance with a French Government now taking economic reprisal for their assistance to Algerian nationalism.

It has diluted the effective strength of the Eisenhower doctrine for the Middle East, and our foreign aid and information programs. It has endangered the continuation of some of our most strategic airbases, and threatened our geographical advantages over the Communist orbit. It has affected our standing in the eyes of the free world, our leadership in the fight to keep that world free, our prestige, and our security; as well as our moral leadership in the fight against Soviet imperialism in the countries behind the Iron Curtain. It has furnished powerful ammunition to anti-Western propagandists throughout Asia and the Middle East – and will be the most troublesome item facing the October conference in Accra of the free nations of Africa, who hope, by easing the transition to independence of other African colonies, to seek common paths by which that great continent can remain aligned with the West.

Finally, the war in Algeria has steadily drained the manpower, the resources, and the spirit of one of our oldest and most important allies – a nation whose strength is absolutely vital to the free world, but who has been forced by this exhausting conflict to postpone new reforms and social services at home, to choke important new plans for economic and political development in French West Africa, the Sahara, and in a united Europe, to face a consolidated domestic Communist movement at a time when communism is in retreat elsewhere in Europe, to stifle free journalism and criticism, and to release the anger and frustrations of its people in perpetual governmental instability and in a precipitous attack on Suez.

No, Algeria is no longer a problem for the French alone – nor will it ever be again. And though their sensitivity to its consideration by this Nation or the U.N. is understandable, a full and frank discussion of an issue so critical to our interests as well as theirs ought to be valued on both sides of an Atlantic alliance that has any real meaning and solidarity.

This is not to say that there is any value in the kind of discussion which has characterized earlier U.S. consideration of this and similar problems – tepid encouragement and moralizations to both sides, cautious neutrality on all real issues, and a restatement of our obvious dependence upon our European friends, our obvious dedication nevertheless to the principles of self-determination, and our obvious desire not to become involved. We have deceived ourselves into believing that we have thus pleased both sides and displeased no one with this head-in-the-sands policy – when, in truth, we have earned the suspicion of all.

Is an Early Resolution Likely Without U.S. Action?

It is time, therefore, that we came to grips with the real issues which confront us in Algeria – the issues which can no longer be avoided in the U.N. or in NATO – issues which become more and more difficult of solution, as a bitter war seemingly without

end destroys, one by one, the ever fewer bridgeheads of reasonable settlement that remain. With each month the situation becomes more taut, the extremists gain more and more power on both the French and Algerian sides. The Government recently invested by the French Assembly is presided over by a Premier clearly identified with a policy of no valid or workable concessions; and his Cabinet, though resting on a balance of parties similar to its predecessor, has been purged of all members associated in any way with a policy of negotiation in Algeria. The French Government, regardless of the personality of its leadership, seems welded to the same rigid formulas that have governed its actions in Algeria for so long; and the only sign of hope is a more articulate concern for a settlement among independent thinkers in France, a notable example being the well-reasoned volume recently published by M. Raymond Aron entitled "The Algerian Tragedy."

M. Aron, the leading political commentator of the conservative *Le Figaro*, urged the constitution of an Algerian state as the best choice of evils. But the prospects for such a settlement being offered or accepted by his own government are already remote, if the record of past failures at negotiation is any indication. In February 1956 Premier Mollet, pelted with tomatoes and bricks, bent to the fury of a French mob in Algiers and replaced the prospective French Resident Minister suspected of leaning toward an early settlement. Last fall, when Mollet himself authorized French emissaries to hold cease-fire discussions with the nationalists in Rome and elsewhere, and encouraged discussion on the matter between the rebels and the Tunisian and Moroccan Governments, key Algerian rebel leaders were taken captive by the French while in air transit between Rabat and Tunis during the course of these meetings. This step, taken on the apparent initiative of the French Minister of Defense and the Resident Minister, and, in fact, without even the knowledge of the Prime Minister, Mr. Mollet himself, not only collapsed all hopes for a cease fire, but also had the most unfavorable repercussions for France in all the uncommitted world.

After the passions of Suez had subsided, Prime Minister Bourguiba, of Tunisia, again attempted to find some common ground; and with much effort persuaded nationalist representatives to accept the principle of internationally controlled elections, subject to safeguards, if the French would abide by the results. But again M. Mollet pulled the rug out from under these efforts; and more recently even M. Bourguiba has been alienated by the French action arbitrarily cutting off economic grants to Tunisia. Another violent demonstration has recently been promised if the present uncompromising Minister Resident, Robert Lacoste, is replaced with a moderate. An extremist French organization in Algiers which pillories M. Mendes-France and moderate reform advocates is actually subsidized by Lacoste and the Government. And French policy continues to insist that neither negotiations nor elections can take place until the hostilities have ceased - a commitment, as I shall discuss further in a moment, which only renders less likely both negotiations and the termination of hostilities, just as it did in Indochina.

There is no doubt that Marshal Juin, who was regarded at one time as an adamant opponent of Moroccan independence, has come to the realization that the present policy of the French Government in Algeria is bankrupt. On Monday the *New York Times*, in an article from Toulouse, France, in discussing the meeting of the French Socialists which was held there stated:

"Those who favored public recognition of Algeria's right to independence were in reality expressing the growing but still mostly private attitude of many Frenchmen who fear the political consequences of such a position if they were to assume it publicly."

It seems to me that public opinion in France is slowly moving toward recognition of the facts of life that Algeria is not realistically integral to France. Nevertheless, the party still follows the policy of M. Mollet, who regards Algeria as an integral part of metropolitan France.

I should like to quote further from the *New York Times* article, in referring to the policy of the Socialist Party of Mr. Mollet:

"The longstanding French offer of a cease-fire has been maintained, and as soon as calm is restored elections would be held. A definite statute would then be negotiated with elected representatives of the people of Algeria, which is considered part of metropolitan France."

The story then goes on to state:

"Until then a provisional statute giving the Moslems a greater voice in local, regional, and, later on, territory-wide affairs would be put into effect. Independence is absolutely barred."

The story continues:

"The Government depends for its existence on the support and participation of the Socialists. If they had voted decisive changes in Algerian policy, the coalition of Socialists and radicals would have collapsed, precipitating a new governmental crisis."

In other words, this refusal to face the facts of life is considered essential to maintain the present governmental structure. All through the meeting of the Socialist Party during the past few days there were strong currents of feeling that a change was necessary.

The fact of the matter is that, although the French claim, on the one hand, that Algeria is an integral part of metropolitan France, the French have never truly recognized Algerians as French citizens. If they permitted all Algerians to vote as French citizens, over one-sixth of all the representatives in the French Assembly would be from Algeria. The fact is that of approximately 625 representatives, they have allowed to Algeria a total of 30. Furthermore, they have denied the Algerians the social, political, and economic benefits that accrue to citizens who live in metropolitan France.

In 1936, when Premier Leon Blum put forth his proposals to gradually integrate Algeria and give the Algerians French citizenship and French nationality, the French citizens of Algeria revolted. A reasonable compromise, which I am certain would have been accepted by the Algerians as far back as 1936, was rejected by the French who lived in Algeria. It is that attitude which prevents any really constructive policy from being developed today.

Although the French population is considered as being a million, if they were counted strictly the number might be found to be as low as 700,000. Equal voting rights have not been given to the whole Algerian population of more than 8 million. The Blum bill provided that full citizenship should be given to a slowly growing base, beginning with those who made special contributions to the state, in the army, for example. But it was agreed in the French colony in Algeria that even this would not be acceptable. All the French mayors of Algeria banded together and offered their collective resignations and made a formal protest. Seventy-five thousand out of a total population of 8 million were given French voting rights.

On the one hand, there is the French claim that its policies protect metropolitan France. On the other hand, the French in Algeria refuse to accept the responsibility which such a point of view entails.

It is for that reason I contend that France, as a practical matter, has, through these statements, recognized Algeria as an independent entity. In my opinion, the situation should be treated in that light, and France should carry on negotiations with the nationalists on that basis. Until that is done, obviously the situation will continue to deteriorate.

What Is the American Record on Algeria?

This dismal recital is of particular importance to us in the Senate, and to the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on U.N. Affairs which I have the honor to serve as chairman, because of the attitude toward the Algerian question which has been adopted throughout this period by our spokesmen in Washington, Paris, and U.N. headquarters. Instead of contributing our efforts to a cease-fire and settlement, American military equipment – particularly helicopters, purchased in this country, which the natives especially fear and hate – has been used against the rebels. Instead of recognizing that Algeria is the greatest unsolved problem of Western diplomacy in North Africa today, our special emissary to that area this year, the distinguished Vice President, failed even to mention this sensitive issue in his report.

Instead of recognizing France's refusal to bargain in good faith with nationalist leaders or to grant the reforms earlier promised, our Ambassador to the U.N., Mr. Lodge, in his statement this year as previously, and our former Ambassador to Paris,

Mr. Dillon, in his statement last year apparently representing the highest administration policy, both expressed firm faith in the French Government's handling of the entire matter. I do not criticize them as individuals, because they were representing the highest administration policy.

In his statement Ambassador Dillon recalled with pride that "the United States has consistently supported France when North African subjects have been discussed in the United Nations"; and that American military equipment - particularly helicopters - had been made available for use against native groups in Algeria.

The United States, Ambassador Dillon emphasized, stands solemnly behind France in her search for a liberal and equitable solution of the problems in Algeria.

Our proud anti-colonialist tradition, he said, does not place the Algerian problem in the same camp as Tunisia and Morocco.

Naturally the French were delighted with Ambassador Dillon's statement. Premier Mollet expressed his nation's pleasure at having the United States "at her side at this moment." *Le Monde* described it as "a victory of the pro-French camp in the State Department over the champions of anti-colonialism and appeasement of the Arabs." But the leader of the national Algerian movement, under house arrest in France, expressed his dismay that the United States had departed from its democratic traditions to ally itself with French colonialism and to favor "the military reconquest of Algeria at the expense of the self-determination of peoples."

Similarly, when in 1955 the U.N. steering committee was asked to place the issue on the agenda of the General Assembly, and our Ambassador to the U.N. insisted that Algeria was so much an integral part of the French Republic that the matter could not properly be discussed by an international body, an Algerian spokesman commented that his people were "at a loss to understand why the United States should identify itself with a policy of colonial repression and bias contrary to American political traditions and interests."

The General Assembly, as the Senate will recall, overruled the committee's decision and placed the question of Algeria on the agenda, causing the French delegates to walk out of the Assembly, the United States again voting against discussion of the issue. Two months later, of course, the matter was dropped and the French returned. In the 1956-57 session the United States again labored to bring about a compromise resolution postponing U.N. consideration for at least a year until the French had settled the matter as they saw fit.

This is not a record to view with pride as Independence Day approaches. No matter how complex the problems posed by the Algerian issue may be, the record of the United States in this case is, as elsewhere, a retreat from the principles of independence and anti-colonialism, regardless of what diplomatic niceties, legal technicalities, or even strategic considerations are offered in its defense. The record is even more dismal when put in the perspective of our consistent refusal over a period of several years to support U.N. consideration of the Tunisian and Moroccan questions.

How Serious Are The Obstacles to an Algerian Solution?

I realize that no magic touchstone of "anti-colonialism" can overcome the tremendous obstacles which must confront any early settlement giving to the Algerians the right of self-determination, and which must distinguish them from the Tunisians or Moroccans. But let us consider the long-range significance of these objections and obstacles, to determine whether our State Department should remain bound by them.

First. The first obstacle is the assertion that Algeria is legally an integral part of metropolitan France and could no more be cut loose than Texas could be severed from the United States, an argument used not only by France but by American spokesmen claiming concern over any U.N. precedent affecting our own internal affairs. But this objection has been largely defeated by the French themselves, as I shall discuss in a moment, as well as by the pace of developments which have forced Algeria to become an international issue, as I have already pointed out. I believe it will be the most important issue on the agenda of the United Nations this fall.

Second. The second hurdle is posed by the unusually large and justifiably alarmed French population in Algeria, who fear for their rights as French citizens, their

property, and their lives, and who compare their situation to that of American colonists who drove back the native Indians. Their problem, in my opinion, is one deserving of special recognition in a final settlement in Algeria, but it does not reduce the necessity to move forward quickly toward such a settlement. On the contrary, the danger to their rights and safety increases the longer such a settlement – which in the end is inevitable – is postponed.

Third. The next objection most frequently raised is the aid and comfort which any reasonable settlement would give to the extremists, terrorists, and saboteurs that permeate the nationalist movement, to the Communist, Egyptian, and other outside anti-Western provocateurs that have clearly achieved some success in penetrating the movement. Terrorism must be combated, not condoned, it is said; it is not right to "negotiate with murderers." Yet once again this is a problem which neither postponement nor attempted conquest can solve. The fever chart of every successful revolution – including, of course, the French – reveals a rising temperature of terrorism and counterterrorism; but this does not of itself invalidate the legitimate goals that fired the original revolution. Most political revolutions – including our own – have been buoyed by outside aid in men, weapons, and ideas. Instead of abandoning African nationalism to the anti-Western agitators and Soviet agents who hope to capture its leadership, the United States, a product of political revolution, must redouble its efforts to earn the respect and friendship of nationalist leaders.

Fourth. Finally, objection is raised to negotiating with a nationalist movement that lacks a single cohesive point of leadership, focus, and direction, as the Tunisians had with Rabib Bourguiba, or as the Moroccans certainly had after the foolish and self-defeating deposition of Sultan Ben Youssef in 1953 – now Mohammed V of Morocco. The lack, moreover, of complete racial homogeneity among the African Algerians has been reflected in cleavages in the nationalist forces. The Algerians are not yet ready to rule their own country, it is said, on a genuine and permanent basis, without the trained leaders and experts every modern state requires. But these objections come with ill grace from a French Government that has deliberately stifled educational opportunities for Algerian natives, jailed, exiled, or executed their leaders, and outlawed their political parties and activities. The same objections were heard in the cases of Tunisia and Morocco – where self-government has brought neither economic chaos, racial terrorism, or political anarchy; and the problem of the plural society, moreover is now the general, and not the exceptional, case in Africa.

Should we antagonize our French allies over Algeria? The most important reason we have sided with the French in Algeria and North Africa is our reluctance to antagonize a traditional friend and important ally in her hour of crisis. We have been understandingly troubled by France's alarmist responses to all prospects for negotiations, by her warning that the only possible consequences are political and economic ruin, "the suitcase or the coffin."

Yet, did we not learn in Indochina, where we delayed action as the result of similar warnings, that we might have served both the French and our own causes infinitely better, had we taken a more firm stand much earlier than we did? Did that tragic episode not teach us that, whether France likes it or not, admits it or not, or has our support or not, their oversea territories are sooner or later, one by one, inevitably going to break free and look with suspicion on the Western nations who impeded their steps to independence? In the words of Turgot: Colonies are like fruit which cling to the tree only till they ripen.

I want to emphasize that I do not fail to appreciate the difficulties of our hard-pressed French allies. It staggers the imagination to realize that France is one nation that has been in a continuous state of war since 1939 – against the Axis, then in Syria, in Indochina, in Morocco, in Tunisia, in Algeria. It has naturally not been easy for most Frenchmen to watch the successive withdrawals from Damascus, Hanoi, Saigon, Pondicherry, Tunis, and Rabat. With each departure a grand myth has been more and more deflated. But the problem is no longer to save a myth of French empire. The problem is to save the French nation, as well as free Africa.

I believe that if 3 years ago the French had made a reasonable concession, there is no doubt that a reasonable solution could have been found, and would have protected French interests. I think such a solution could well have been found then, but it becomes more and more difficult to do so as the months pass.

Furthermore, the point will be made in the United Nations meeting this fall that the United States really put off the matter last February, because the French argued for further time. The fact is that the situation has deteriorated since the United Nations met, and therefore the United States will be met with a strong resolution proposing that the United States and the other members of the United Nations recognize the fact that Algeria is attempting to obtain the right of independent existence. I hope before that time the French will put forth a proposal; and I suggest that with the help of Habib Bourguiba and the Sultan of Morocco and the good offices of NATO, a solution recognizing the rights of both parties can be put forward.

Mr. President, no amount of mutual politeness, wishful thinking, nostalgia, or regret should blind either France or the United States to the fact that, if France and the West at large are to have continuing influence in North Africa - and I certainly favor a continuation of French influence in that area - then the essential first step is the independence of Algeria along the lines of Morocco and Tunisia. If concrete steps are taken in this direction, then there may yet be a French North Africa. Short of this step, there will inevitably only be a hollow memory and a desolate failure. As Mr. David Schoenbrun, in his recent excellent volume "As France Goes," cogently argues France must either gamble on the friendship of a free North Africa or get out of North Africa completely. It should be evident after the Egyptian fiasco that France cannot impose her will upon some 22 million Africans indefinitely. Sooner or later the French will have to recognize the existence of an Algerian state. The sooner, the cheaper in terms of men, money, and a chance to salvage something from the wreckage of the French Union.

Indeed, the one ray of hope that emerges from this otherwise dark picture is the indication that the French have acknowledged the bankruptcy in their Algerian policy, however they may resent our saying so, by legislating extremely far-reaching and generous measures for greater self-government in French west Africa. Here, under the guidance of M. Felix Houphouet-Boigny, the first Negro Cabinet Minister in French history, the French Government took significant action by establishing a single college electoral system, which Algeria has never had, and, by providing universal suffrage, a wide measure of decentralized government, and internal self-control. Here realistic forward steps are being taken to fuse nationalist aspirations into a gradual and measurable evolution of political freedom.

What Have We Learned in Indochina, Tunisia, and Morocco?

Not only the French, however, needed to be convinced of the ultimate futility and cost of an Algerian-type struggle. The United States and other Western allies poured money and material into Indochina in a hopeless attempt to save for the French a land that did not want to be saved, in a war in which the enemy was both everywhere and nowhere at the same time, as I pointed out to the Congress on several occasions. We accepted for years the predictions that victory was just around the corner, the promises that Indochina would soon be set free, the arguments that this was a question for the French alone.

And even after we had witnessed the tragic consequences of our vacillation, in terms not only of Communist gains but the decimation of French military strength and political effectiveness, we still listened to the same predictions, the same promises, and the same arguments in Tunisia and Morocco. The strong pro-Western bent in each of these countries today, despite beguiling offers from the Communist East, is a tribute to the leadership of such men as Prime Minister Bourguiba, whose years in French confinement never dimmed his appreciation of Western democratic values.

The French Record in Tunisia and Morocco

Certainly the French cannot claim sole credit for this pro-Western orientation. Although in Tunisia, and even more in Morocco, which has a far more diversified and flexible economy, the French left impressive testimony of economic achievement, the fruits of this progress were by no means equitably distributed through the native populations; and there was almost no parallel growth of educational and political opportunity. Though a nationalist political party - the Istiqlal in Morocco and the Neo-Destour in Tunisia - gathered force in each country they were cramped by close French surveillance, by long periods of illegality, by the arrest, isolation, or imprisonment of almost every important political leader, and by a lack of opportunity to share real political responsibility. Trade unions, which in Africa provide one of the

best pools of political experience, were given little freedom for development.

In the years after the Second World War a succession of military commanders and resident generals in both Tunis and Rabat seemed to look upon their missions in North Africa as primarily concerned with public order, the suppression of dissent by force, and the plugging up of nationalist outlets. The Istiqlal Party was suppressed outright from 1952 to 1954, while no effective Moroccan press was allowed to publish outside of French and Spanish restraint. Literacy was as low as 10 percent among Moroccans, only somewhat higher among Tunisians.

Two years prior to the achievement of Moroccan independence, the French exiled the Sultan and replaced him with the puppet Ben Arafa, the mere creature of the French and of El Glaoui, the Pasha of Marrakesh, who had conspired with Marshal Juin to depose the Sultan. These crude steps, the attempt to impose a military solution on Morocco and the sabotage by the French Government and "colons" of the only genuine reform effort of Resident General Grandval in 1955, in fact insured the independence of Morocco. For opinion decisively rallied to the side of the exiled Sultan, and the French had increasing difficulty in dealing with the Moroccan Army of Liberation and the underground tactics of the Istiqlal Party.

In Tunisia the garrison policy of the French was not quite as vindictive and thorough – but no real concessions were made, and the leader of the Tunisian Neo-Destour Party, Bourguiba, was kept in isolation.

The U.S. Record on Tunisia and Morocco

Unfortunately, the Tunisians and the Moroccans also know they owe little, if anything, to the United States for their new-found freedom. To be sure, we hedged our consistent backing of the French position with occasional pieties about ultimate self-government and hopes for just solutions. And, fortunately, our Government did not offer recognition to the French-sponsored Ben Arafa after the deposition of Sultan Ben Youssef, with whom President Roosevelt had conferred at the time of the Casablanca Conference. But in the series of discussions which began in 1951 in the United Nations over Morocco and Tunisia, the United States, in vote after vote, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, argued either that the U.N. had no real competence to deal with these issues, or, after this argument had petrified, that to do so would only inflame the situation. In short, on every single U.N. vote concerning the issues of Morocco and Tunisia, we failed to vote against the French and with the so-called anticolonial nations of Asia and Africa even once.

Tunisia, Morocco, and the West Today

Fortunately for the United States and France, and in spite of – not because of – our past records, neither Tunisia nor Morocco has a natural proclivity toward either Moscow, Peking, or Cairo today. But it is apparent, nevertheless, that the latter constitute possible alternate magnets if the Western nations become too parental or tyrannical. In Tunisia, the political opposition to Premier Bourguiba, led by the self-exiled Salah Ben Youssef, is clearly seeking to mobilize the support of the Egyptian and Russian Governments. In Morocco the more reactionary and traditionalist forces, which could come to power if the present Western-minded Government fails, seems to be groping for support in Cairo, and probably Moscow as well, and we in this country are finally fully aware of the fact that Russia possesses an effective repertoire of economic inducements and political tricks; that Egypt appeals persuasively, in the name of African nationalism, for unity against the West; and that Red China offers nations emerging from a colonial state a ready answer on how to achieve quickly the transition from economic backwardness to economic strength.

U.S. policies in these areas – to provide an effective alternative to these forces, who aided Tunisian and Moroccan independence while we remained silent – cannot be tied any longer to the French, who seek to make their economic aid and political negotiations dependent upon the recipient's attitude toward Algeria. We cannot temporize as long as we did last year over emergency wheat to Tunisia. We cannot offer these struggling nations economic aid so far below their needs, so small a fraction of what we offered some of their less needy, less democratic, and less friendly neighbors that even so stanch a friend as Premier Bourguiba was forced to reject Ambassador Richards' original offer – just as he had rejected an offer of Soviet aid more than 30 times as great. In Morocco, too, our aid has fallen short of the new

nation's basic needs.

We must, on the other hand, avoid the temptation to imitate the Communists by promising these new nations automatic remedies and quick cures for economic distress – which lead only too readily to gathering disillusionment. But we can realistically contribute to those programs which will generate genuine economic strength as well as give relief from famine, drought, and catastrophe. The further use of agricultural surpluses, and the new revolving loan fund making possible long-term planning and commitment, should be especially well suited to the requirements of Morocco and Tunisia, which have moved beyond the point of most underdeveloped states but not yet attained the strength of most Western economies.

Another step which we can take immediately, of the highest priority yet small in cost, is to step up considerably the number of young people of North Africa who have so far come to the United States for higher education and technical training, and to increase our own educational and training missions in that area. The building up of a national civil service, a managerial talent, and a pool of skilled tradesmen and professionals is an immediate prerequisite for these countries – and the addition of even a few trained administrators, engineers, doctors, and educators will pay off many times over in progress, stability, and good will.

In these ways, we can help fulfill a great and promising opportunity to show the world that a new nation, with an Arab heritage, can establish itself in the Western tradition and successfully withstand both the pull toward Arab feudalism and fanaticism and the pull toward Communist authoritarianism.

What Are the French Elements of a Settlement in Algeria?

The lessons of Tunisia and Morocco, like the lesson of Indochina before them, constitute, I hope, the final evidence of the futility of the present French course in Algeria and the danger of the present frozen American posture. Prompt settlement is an urgent necessity – for North Africa, for France, for the United States, NATO, and the Western World. Yet what are the elements of "settlement" put forward from time to time by the French, in which we have placed our faith? They are three: First, military re-conquest or pacification; second, social and economic reform; and third, political union with France.

I respectfully suggest that these three elements represent no settlement at all, that the continual emphasis upon them is only postponing, not hastening, the day of final reckoning. Permit me to examine each point briefly.

First is the French insistence upon pacification of the area, in reality re-conquest, before further talks proceed, a policy which only makes both settlement and a cease-fire less likely. For it encourages the nationalists to assume that they can play a game of endurance in which the patience and tenacity of French politicians will finally snap as they did regarding Indochina in 1954. The so-called pacification policy of M. Lacoste does consist of more imaginative measures than simple military repression, since it attempts to combine the elimination of rebel and terrorist activity in individual localities with measures of social reform and reconstruction. But the rebellion is now too contagious to be treated by pacification methods, even if the French could afford to increase substantially the manpower already poured into the area, and despite the steady stream of optimistic French communique

s.

For, as General Wingate wisely pointed out in the last war, "Given a population favorable to penetration, a thousand resolute and well-armed men can paralyze for an indefinite period the operations of a hundred thousand"; and this is precisely what has happened in Algeria. The French tend to look at the Algerian rebel problem in terms of a military chessboard, when in fact each identifiable rebel has behind him the silent or half-articulate support of many other Algerians. Thus, nearly half a million valiant French soldiers face an enemy with no organized forces, no acceptable strategy, no military installations, and no identifiable lines of supply. They themselves fight not with the zeal with which they defend their own liberty, but fight in vain – and it has throughout history been in vain to curb the liberty of another people.

The United States, contributing to French military strength and refusing to urge

mediation of a cease-fire, has apparently swallowed the long series of counterstatements offered by the French suggesting why the war in Algeria did not end long ago. From time to time we have been told that the war was being kept alive only because of interference and meddling by Colonel Nasser, that the rebellion was active only to gain the attention of the United Nations, or because of help from Morocco and Tunisia, or because of unwarranted interference by American shirtsleeve diplomats and journalists, or finally because of Russian and Communist meddling in Algeria. None of these explanations which seek to make outsiders the real agents of the Algerian rebellion carries much conviction any longer, even to the French, as shown in the multiplicity of recent attempts to suppress local critical newspaper and public comment.

Second, the French have continued to tell the U.N. of their present and proposed economic and social reforms in Algeria, promising a better life for all if they can ever end the fighting. It is true that the French have finally opened up greater employment opportunities for the Moslems, have expropriated some land for redistribution, and have made some efforts to increase wages of agricultural workers. But the tardiness of these reforms, and the narrow-mindedness of the French minority in Algeria which over more than 20 years defeated the reform efforts of the few liberal ministers, have permitted the wave of nationalism to move so far, and to take root so deeply, that these palliative efforts are too little and too late for a situation of now convulsive proportions. We must, I am afraid, accept the lesson of all nationalist movements that economic and social reforms, even if honestly sponsored and effectively administered, do not solve or satisfy the quest for freedom. Most peoples, in fact, appear willing to pay a price in economic progress in order to achieve political independence.

Third and finally, the French conception of settlement has stubbornly adhered to the concept of Algerian incorporation within France itself. This area, it should be recalled, was taken only by the French a little more than a century ago – the southern desert area has always been governed from Paris like a crown colony – and although the populous and fertile northern coastland was legally made a part of France in 1871, native Algerians were not made French citizens until 1947. Even then, that move was made to cement French control rather than to grant equality, for at the same time a system of electoral representation in the French National Assembly and Algerian Assembly was established giving equal power to two strictly separated electoral groups – one consisting of over 7 million Algerians and the other consisting of some 1 million French colonials. Only 75,000 African Algerians had full voting rights – and only 30 seats from Algeria, mostly filled by French politicians, were elected to the French National Assembly. Even those seats are vacant now, of course, the 1956 elections not having been extended to crisis-torn Algeria.

The result of this gap between word and deed, and the continued reluctance of the French to permit more than spasmodic and slight reforms at the expense of vested interests in France and Algeria, has been to alienate most sections of Algerian opinion so that assimilation is now a fruitless line of effort. There has been a progressive increase in the number of African Algerians, once committed to a program of integration with France, who have recanted and joined the movement of independence – the most notable instance being that of Ferhat Abbas, one of the ablest nationalist leaders, who long argued for the assimilationist approach and did not wholly despair of such a settlement until shortly before 1956, when he joined the National Liberation Front.

Had there been consistent progress in extending to all Algerians political equality and opportunity, so that over a realizable period of time there would have been a common standard of French citizenship, and had a steady effort been made to enlarge the political rights which were at least inherent in the 1947 statute for Algeria, it is possible that a responsible solution could have been reached. As late as 2 years ago a promise – with a specific date tag on it – that would have given genuinely equal voting rights to the French National Assembly, and at least parity in Algerian municipal government, might well have won general Moslem support. But the French were unwilling to see as many as 100 Moslem deputies in Parliament and to provide – at a cost no greater than the present Algerian war – common social services and education. And it is this failure on the part of the French to accept the

consequences of their own conception that has closed the door forever on the possibility of a true French Union, and made Algeria irreversibly an aspect of the broader search for political independence in Africa. Moreover, nationalism in Africa cannot be evaluated purely in terms of the historical and legal niceties argued by the French, and thus far accepted by the State Department. National self-identification frequently takes place by quick combustion which the rain of repression simply cannot extinguish, especially in an area where there is a common Islamic heritage and where most people – including Algeria's closest neighbors in Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya – have all gained political independence. New nationhood is recorded in quick succession – Ghana yesterday, Nigeria perhaps tomorrow, and colonies in central Africa moving into dominion status. Whatever the history and law books may say, we cannot evade the evidence of our own time especially we in the Americas whose own experiences furnish a model from which many of these new nations draw inspiration.

What Course Should the United States Adopt in Algeria?

And thus I return, Mr. President, to the point at which I began this analysis. The time has come when our Government must recognize, that this is no longer a French problem alone; and that the time has passed, where a series of piecemeal adjustments, or even a last attempt to incorporate Algeria fully within France, can succeed. The time has come for the United States to face the harsh realities of the situation and to fulfill its responsibilities as leader of the free world – in the U.N., in NATO, in the administration of our aid programs and in the exercise of our diplomacy – in shaping a course toward political independence for Algeria.

It should not be the purpose of our Government to impose a solution on either side, but to make a contribution toward breaking the vicious circle in which the Algerian controversy whirls.

Nor do I insist that the cumbersome procedures of the U.N. are necessarily best adapted to the settlement of a dispute of this sort. But, direct United Nations recommendation and action would be preferable to the current lack of treatment the problem is receiving; and in any event, when the case appears on the U.N. agenda again, the United States must drastically revise the Dillon-Lodge position in which our policy has been corseted too long.

Moreover, though the resolution which was adopted at the last session in general gave backing to the French efforts to localize the dispute, there was nonetheless a proviso – a proviso which served to put France on a probationary status and warn that measurable progress would have to be shown by the next meeting of the Assembly. We have now come nearly to the halfway point of this interim period, and the situation has only further deteriorated. To prevent a still more difficult situation in the fall session, our State Department should now be seeking ways of breaking the present stalemate. And I am asking this body, as it has successfully done before in cases of Indonesia and Indochina, to offer guidance to the administration and leadership to the world on this crucial issue.

I am submitting today a resolution which I believe outlines the best hopes for peace and settlement in Algeria. It urges, in brief, that the President and Secretary of State be strongly encouraged to place the influence of the United States behind efforts, either through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or good offices of the Prime Minister of Tunisia and the Sultan of Morocco, to achieve a solution which will recognize the independent personality of Algeria and establish the basis for a settlement interdependent with France and the neighboring nations.

This resolution conveys my conviction that it should not be impossible to break a deadlock in a matter of such close concern to NATO and to mediatory forces in the rest of North Africa. The Governments of Tunisia and Morocco, neither members of the Arab League and each concerned to continue Western connections, provide the best hope, and indeed, they furnished such help, as already noted, last summer and early fall. Two weeks ago M. Bourguiba again made an appeal for an Algerian solution within an overall French-oriented North African federation. Even the Indian Government, often assumed to be spokesman of nationalism for nationalism's sake, offered last summer to act as a possible intermediary in a solution which would grant political independence to Algeria but confirm special protections for French citizens and to place Algeria in a special economic federation with France.

Neither reasonable mediators nor reasonable grounds for mediation are impossible to find. The problem in Algeria is to devise a framework of political independence which combines close economic interdependence with France. This is not an illusory goal. Algerian Nationalist leaders are mostly French speaking; Algeria has an inherent interest in continued economic and cultural ties with France as well as in Western aid generally. But these natural links with France will ebb away if a change is not soon made. Last November, when Algeria was under U.N. consideration, Premier Bourguiba expressed the anguish which afflicts the responsible nationalist of North Africa on the Algerian question:

"The vote of free Tunisia will be against France, but it would be a mistake to believe that we are happy about this conflict. I had hoped sincerely that Tunisia would be a bridge between the Occident and the Orient and that our first independent vote would have been in favor of France. Although that has proved to be impossible I still cannot bring myself to despair, for the first time in my life, of the wisdom of the French people and their government. The day may perhaps yet come, if the Government of the Republic acts swiftly enough, when French civilization will be truly defended in world council by the leaders of a French North African confederation."

The United States must be prepared to lend all efforts to such a settlement, and to assist in the economic problems which will flow from it. This is not a burden which we lightly or gladly assume. But our efforts in no other endeavor are more important in terms of once again seizing the initiative in foreign affairs, demonstrating our adherence to the principles of national independence, and winning the respect of those long suspicious of our negative and vacillating record on colonial issues.

It is particularly important, inasmuch as Hungary will be a primary issue at the United Nations meeting this fall, that the United States clear the air and take a clear position on this issue, on which we have been vulnerable in the past. And we must make it abundantly clear to the French as well as the North Africans that we seek no economic advantages for ourselves in that area, no opportunities to replace French economic ties or exploit African resources.

If we are to secure the friendship of the Arab, the African, and the Asian - and we must, despite what Mr. Dulles says about our not being in a popularity contest - we cannot hope to accomplish it solely by means of billion-dollar foreign aid programs. We cannot win their hearts by making them dependent upon our handouts. Nor can we keep them free by selling them free enterprise, by describing the perils of communism or the prosperity of the United States, or limiting our dealings to military pacts. No, the strength of our appeal to these key populations - and it is rightfully our appeal, and not that of the Communists - lies in our traditional and deeply felt philosophy of freedom and independence for all peoples everywhere.

Perhaps it is already too late for the United States to save the West from total catastrophe in Algeria. Perhaps it is too late to abandon our negative policies on these issues, to repudiate the decades of anti-Western suspicion, to press firmly but boldly for a new generation of friendship among equal and independent states. But we dare not fail to make the effort.

"Men's hearts wait upon us," said Woodrow Wilson in 1913, "Men's lives hang in the balance; men's hopes call upon us to say what we will do. Who shall live up to the great trust? Who dares fail to try?"

Mr. President, I submit for appropriate reference a resolution on the subject which I have discussed today.

(The resolution (S. Res. 153) was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, as follows.)

Resolved, That taking cognizance of the war in Algeria, its repression of legitimate nationalist aspirations, its growing contamination of good relations between the new states of North Africa and the West, its widening erosion of the effective strength of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the mounting international concern it has aroused in the United Nations, the President and Secretary of State be, and hereby are, strongly encouraged to place the influence of the United States behind efforts, either through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or through the good offices of the Prime Minister of Tunisia and the Sultan of Morocco, to achieve a solution which will recognize the independent personality of Algeria and establish the basis for a

settlement interdependent with France and the neighboring nations; and be it further

Resolved, That, if no substantial progress has been noted by the time of the next United Nations General Assembly session, the United States support an international effort to derive for Algeria the basis for an ordinary achievement of independence.