

Ferhat Abbas

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE ALGERIAN REPUBLIC DEMANDS INDEPENDENCE

The French colonial government in Algeria had its origins in the mid-nineteenth century, but it was only in the mid-twentieth century that an indigenous Algerian independence movement emerged—a movement that drew support from the broad community of Algerian Muslims and from many left-wing Algerian-born French citizens. A bloody guerrilla war broke out in 1954, pitting the *colons*, or ethnic French colonial elite, against the often uneasy alliance of indigenous Algerians and sympathetic Algerian-born French men and women who made up the National Liberation Front (FLN). This part colonial, part civil war took on an even more bitter quality when French military units were dispatched to Algeria to crush the revolutionary independence movement. The Algerian War also politicized many young people in France, prompting them to call into question France's self-proclaimed mission to “civilize” its colonies.

The following document is the text of an address by Ferhat Abbas, the prime minister of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, delivered on October 31, 1960. Delivered after several brutal years of war and a year of fruitless negotiations, Abbas placed blame for the Algerian predicament squarely upon the French colonial government and its accompanying military force, as well as on the refusal of French national authorities in Paris to negotiate in good faith toward Algerian self-determination. The only resolution of the impasse, he concluded, was for the Algerian people to determine their own destiny in a world increasingly sympathetic to their cause.

People of Algeria,

Tomorrow, November 1, 1960, the war in Algeria will enter its seventh year. The fight for liberty and independence will continue with its inevitable wake of suffering and sacrifice.

A great deal has been said and written about the war in Algeria. Never will its unjust nature, its horrors, its crimes be sufficiently denounced. With this war of colonial reconquest, designed to perpetuate French domination over an Arab and African country, imperialism has plundered, wrought terror and famine—its principal arms in the attempt to bring our people to their knees.

When history takes stock of the atrocities committed by the French army during the six years of war, the French people and the civilized world will be astounded. They will know the exact nature and the monstrous price of "pacification."

The colonial regime is the very negation of justice and law. It is useless to think that what was usurped by force can be restored other than by force. Imperialism has never given liberty to its victims as a gift. As I have said, independence is not offered, it is obtained by force.

The Algerian problem was only imposed upon the colonialists the day the Army of National Liberation imposed itself on the adversary. Who would dare deny this?

The capitulation which the French Government attempts in vain to obtain through alleged negotiations on a ceasefire is madness. We only took up arms as a last resort, when all peaceful means were found to be unworkable. We are not going to lay them down on the

basis of vague promises of a self-determination whose implementation is entrusted to an army, an administration and a police which condemns the very principle of self-determination. That would be to betray our dead, our martyrs and our flag. It would mean condemning our country to a neocolonialism as pernicious as the former.

Those who are counting on our defeat and those who speculate on our lassitude are making a mistake. To be or not to be, to live as an African people, free and independent, or to remain a multitude of slaves—confronted with this alternative, our choice is clear.

The juridical quibbling of the imperialists and the threat of genocide, which a French army in search of prestige hangs over the heads of our people, will not win out over our will, our obstination to assert ourselves as Algerians, as people of the Maghreb and to make Algeria a free and independent country like the other countries of Africa.

During the period when Robert Lacoste became the spokesman for the fascist generals and the ultras, he said in Oran that he only needed to reinstate the "scorched earth" strategy used by his compatriot from Périgord, Bugeaud, in order to triumph over our revolution.

There is no doubt that such methods are criminal and inhuman because they strike the innocent civilian population primarily. But colonial criminality is no longer sufficient for its own survival. It finished by triumphing over our ancestors because they were isolated. From 1830 to 1871 they fought ceaselessly, but they momentarily succumbed because they were

alone for forty years against a rich nation and one of the biggest armies in the world. Today, the circumstances of our struggle have changed. While French imperialism is increasingly disapproved of and isolated, we receive messages of sympathy and tangible proofs of active solidarity from all over the world.

As dawn breaks on the seventh year of war, the international juncture is not unfavorable to us. At the United Nations, the Algerian question is posed in clearer terms this year. We hope that this international body will finally assume its responsibilities.

The various trips of governmental delegations to China, to the Soviet Union have been crowned with success. Our Government has been recognized by the great Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This recognition will have wide repercussions. The support of the socialist camp is henceforth behind us. This is a source of satisfaction to us and we willingly leave to certain Westerners the hypocritical waving of the banner of anti-communism.

Our Arab brothers stand beside us and assure us of their support. The era of colonization is over. This year, rightly called the African Year, has seen 15 brother countries make their entry into the family of nations. This historical phenomenon of decolonization and of the achievement of an authentic national life is irresistible. It is the result of a long battle to which the Algerian people is conscious of having greatly contributed.

Our African brothers know that in the Algerian war, French imperialism wants to impose a myth, while the Algerian people are defending a reality. The Algerian people, which is an African people, is fighting for its freedom and its independence. We are convinced that whatever happens, the African peoples who have waged the same battle will continue to show their solidarity for our cause.

Public opinion in Europe and in South America is more and more sensitive to the struggle of the Algerian people. All those who have fought for freedom identify our struggle with theirs. Even in France, the French people,

more and more conscious of their responsibilities, denounce the war of colonial reconquest and vigorously demand peace in Algeria. We salute that French youth, those workers, intellectuals and all those fighting against the continuation of the war in our country.

Everywhere in the world the forces of peace are regrouping themselves.

These are comforting realities. But more than anything else, the unity and the vigilance of our people and the combativity and the valor of our Army of National Liberation remain the unflinching armor against which the colonialist conspiracies and the hate of certain French soldiers will be shattered.

The Algerian combatants have well merited their home and country. Their courage, their heroism, their abnegation have become legendary. They call forth the world's admiration.

People of Algeria,

Despite all these favorable and encouraging factors, our task still remains difficult. Our responsibilities are heavy. Our adversary has not exhausted his reserve of ruses and manoeuvres. Equivocations and ambiguities are, in his hands, formidable weapons. To the weight of an army of more than 800,000 men which does not recoil before any means to attempt to humiliate and destroy us, must be added the promises that the French Government knows full well it cannot keep.

Let us speak frankly. Self-determination presupposes a free referendum. This freedom would be illusory if the French army controlled and organized the consultation by terrorizing the population.

Free choice signifies the freedom to determine one's own destiny and not the limitation of that choice to the furthering of a chopped-up Algerian State, deprived of most of its essential attributes, partitioned into several groupings, with its Saharan sector amputated, as General de Gaulle's "Algerian Algeria" would have it.

The Algeria for which the people are fighting is an independent and fully sovereign Algeria. This means an Algeria where all the inhabitants will enjoy fully and completely

their rights as citizens without regard to their origins.

Have those who, by puerile camouflages, still attempt to have prevail the false solution of an imposed status learned nothing then? Have they already forgotten the smarting failure of the Bao Dai experience, when they wanted to impose an executive against the Vietnamese people?

The war in Algeria is a fight for freedom. The Algerian people which has suffered colonial domination for more than 130 years, which has shed its blood generously for the last six

years, is conscious of the price of its struggle. It is aware of the occult forces which lust after the riches of its soil. The policy of the lie and of dupery will no longer affect it. All the Algerian people, men and women, children and old people, are aware of colonial realities

And so the people will continue their struggle until victory, that is, until the liberation of Algeria and the construction of the Arab Maghreb.

LONG LIVE THE ALGERIAN REPUBLIC,
LONG LIVE ALGERIAN INDEPENDENCE.