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HOW THE REFERENDUM IS ORGANISED IN ALGERIA

Three weeks after having been brought to power by the May 13th Coup d'Etat, General de Gaulle went on his first tour of Algeria. In Algeria, on July 4th, he outlined his policy in Algiers:

"I declare, from this day onward, that France considers only one category of people dwells in Algeria. There is nothing else other than equal Frenchmen in fullshare of the same rights and the same ties."

On June 7th, he proclaimed in Mostaganem (near Oran): "Long live French Algeria!"

Now, de Gaulle has set to work to prepare conditions for the referendum in Algeria as well as in France, and he is urging the Algerian people to express their opinion on French institutions. He relies on General Raoul Salan, who is in command of an Army of over 500,000 to organise the vote in Algeria. General Salan, on July 7th, specified the task of the Army in these words:

"Now, the battle of the Referendum must be won, and in this the Army has a leading part to play."

One can easily imagine the enormous amount of pressure that is being put on the Algerians to force them to go to the poll. The French are aiming at a clear purpose: they could claim, after polling day, that by casting their votes, the Muslims consider themselves - therefore must be considered - as Frenchmen. Colonel Godard, an influential member of General Salan's staff, said:

"The point is not that the Algerians should express a positive or a negative vote; the point is that they do poll. Thus, they shall implicitly approve of their French citizenship. We can make a splendid thing out of this business." (Quoted by "France-Observateur", July 24th).

On this, "Le Monde" (August 2nd) writes:

"The French authorities are now considering protracting on many days the voting process, each region of Algeria voting in turn. Thus, troops might be more easily brought to any required spot to ensure the 'security' of the voters."

On this same subject, "Paris-Presse" (July 28th) provides further evidence, under the headlines: "How shall they vote in Algeria? What kind of public control can be secured for that?". The paper goes on: "It will not be an edifying display for the onlookers to see that the polling rooms are at one time empty, at another time overcrowded with voters marching in close order under the 'protection' of infantry and armour."

General Salan's troops will be helped in carrying out their task by other forces amounting to nearly 200,000, consisting of armed policemen, "Gendarmes" and French Settlers' militia. By using such methods General de Gaulle may be assured of securing between three and three and a half million Algerian votes. The policy of "French Algeria" sponsored by Guy Mollet, Robert Lacoste, Bourges-Maunoury and Felix Gaillard, which the Algerians always violently opposed, is aggravated by this attempt to legalize it by means of a plebiscite. The world must be warned that an enormous swindle is in progress on a gigantic scale, threatening the whole Algerian people.

The committees of public safety, presided over by General Salan and General Massu, have decided that among the Algerians 95% should - and would - pronounce in favour of de Gaulle. World opinion must know that the Algerians refuse to take part in this poll: They will boycott it, according to the instructions issued by the Front of National Liberation (F.L.N.).

The Algerians are no Frenchmen - they cannot and will not be Frenchmen. They have been forced into war and want to have a nationality of their own recognised, to enjoy freedom of self-determination, which is a sacred principle of the United Nations Charter and to be independent on their own national soil.

Algeria is no part of France. It is a part of North Africa, to which it is bound by geographic, as well as cultural and economic ties. Can it be that in the country of Descartes one may conceive a subservient Algeria to be wedged in between independent Morocco and Tunisia, as an enclave which willy-nilly would be tied up to France as part of it?

The Algerian patriotic feeling is now stronger than ever. The heroic and unequal struggle of the Algerian people against one of the most forceful armies in the world may attest it. General de Gaulle is mustering all the energy of his Army in Algeria in an attempt to impose a settlement by force of the Algerian problem. By acting in such a way he may only worsen the Algerian conflict and increase France's difficulties not only in Algeria, but throughout North Africa.

20th August, 1958.