

CHAPTER VII

QUESTIONS CONCERNING AFRICA

COMPLAINTS OF TUNISIA AND FRANCE

COMPLAINTS RESULTING FROM  
INCIDENTS AT SAKIET-SIDI-YOUSSEF

On 13 February 1958, the Tunisian Government reported to the Security Council that, following an act of aggression by France at Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef, it had taken measures in exercise of its right of self-defence. It had prohibited: (1) the French armed forces stationed in Tunisia from engaging in troop movements; (2) the entry of French naval units into Tunisian ports; (3) the landing or parachuting of reinforcements; and (4) the flights of French military aircraft over Tunisian territory.

On the same day, Tunisia asked that the Council consider the following item: "Complaint by Tunisia in respect of an act of aggression committed against it by France on 8 February 1958 at Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef".

In an explanatory memorandum it charged that Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef had been subjected to massive bombardment and strafing with machine guns. This attack, it was charged, was one of a series of violations of Tunisian territory committed since May 1957 by French forces from Algeria. The Council was requested to take an appropriate decision to end a situation which threatened the security of Tunisia and endangered international peace and security in that part of the world.

On 17 February, in a further communication to the Council, Tunisia explained that the situation threatening its security resulted from the presence of French troops in the country and that the war in Algeria and its repercussions on the security of Tunisia endangered international peace.

On 14 February, France requested that the Council consider the following complaint: "Situation resulting from the aid furnished by Tunisia to rebels enabling them to conduct operations from Tunisian territory directed against the integrity of French territory and the safety of the persons and property of French nationals".

In an explanatory memorandum, France charged that Tunisia had violated Article 4 of

the United Nations Charter by not showing itself capable of maintaining order on the Franco-Tunisian border, or disposed to do so. (Article 4 of the Charter stipulates that membership in the United Nations is open to peace-loving States which are willing to accept and carry out the obligations contained in the Charter.)

The Algerian rebels, aided and abetted by Tunisian authorities, had, according to France, established in Tunisia an effective military organization which had enabled them to carry out numerous border violations and incursions into French territory. On 11 January, a serious incident involving a rebel band which had come from Tunisia had taken place in the vicinity of Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef. Tunisian aid to the rebels was continued despite France's previous warnings as to the responsibility Tunisia assumed by pursuing such policy, and despite France's efforts to prevent the recurrence of incidents. The reaction of the French air force at the time of the Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef incident had thus been the result of many provocations, and France could not separate that incident from the acts that had caused it. France therefore asked the Security Council to condemn the assistance furnished by Tunisia to the Algerian rebels.

On 18 February, the Council included the two complaints in its agenda and invited Tunisia, which was not a member of the Council, to participate in the debate without the right to vote. Before the adoption of the agenda, the representative of France stated that what was involved was not an act of aggression, but an act isolated in time and space. His approval of the provisional agenda should not be construed as indicating his agreement to the wording of the Tunisian complaint.

During the debate, the United States and the United Kingdom representatives informed the Council that their Governments had offered their good offices in order to assist the parties to settle outstanding problems and that the offer had been accepted.

After a brief debate, the Council decided to