

The Political and Diplomatic Activities of Dr. Ahmed Francis from 1959 to 1961

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Abstract ;

The study deals with the personality of Ahmed Francis and his political and diplomatic role in the period from 1959 to 1961, especially during the stage of preparation for serious and official negotiations during the first Evian Accords, within the context of the de Gaulle manoeuvres and bargaining in order to preserve France's acquisitions in Algeria, including the Sahara issue, so that we tried to focus on his training and political activity under the national movement, as a representative of Algerians in various parliamentary assemblies, which gained him the ability and political practice alongside Ferhat Abbas, to the decision to join the FLN to be the voice of the revolution in Arab and European forums and capitals and at the United Nations, to protest the colonial policy and the right of Algerians to self-determination, He also travelled between countries to collect material and financial funds, including arms... as Minister of Finance in the Algerian Provisional Government, his experience in political practice as a representative and orator qualified him to manage the negotiations file with merit and worthiness in front of the French negotiator with the Algerian delegation for his terrible ability in familiarity with the file, which defined its most important points for dialogue within the context of the unity of the Algerian nation and territory and the non-renunciation of the principles set forth in the Declaration of 1 November 1954.

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Introduction :

The political and social changes at the end of the First World War imposed the emergence of political elites that contributed to highlighting the national cause in light of the exceptional laws that Algerian society knew and the need to represent it and defend its rights, and the restriction of the national movement as allowed by the decisions and rules of the colonial authority in Algeria. Among these elites was Ahmed Francis, one of the educated urban bourgeois families with French culture in the city of Relizane, who became involved in trade union life from 1933 to parliamentary representation in the Constituent Assembly in Paris in 1946 as a representative of the Democratic Union of Algerian Manifesto.

With the beginning of the liberation revolution, he abandoned his ideology and joined the ranks of the National Liberation Front with Ferhat Abbas, which gave a strong impetus to the liberation revolution as a man of politics, dialogue, and peace and put an end to the French propaganda of the illegitimacy of the revolution, to be a support and voice for the Algerian cause in international forums and capitals politically, media and diplomatically, using his political experience in the national movement, and his role was more prominent during his assumption of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs in the first and second interim government

and during the first Evian negotiations by drafting the negotiating file in what was known as the Francis Committee 1961.

Thus, the question is: "What was the political and diplomatic role of Ahmed Francis during the period 1959-1961, a crucial period characterized by Charles de Gaulle's manoeuvres to achieve gains at the expense of territorial integrity and the Algerian nation?"

1. Ahmed Francis' Family Roots:

There are many hypotheses about the origin of the word Francis. Still, it is likely that immediately after the French occupation of Algeria, one of their ancestors worked as a money changer, converting Algerian currency into French currency, so his customers looking for the Francis exchange or Francis dirhams called him 'Francis', a nickname that eventually carried the family name, and with the establishment of civil status in Algeria, the family was registered under this name in 1886 under number 342 of the pedigree trees from the mother register of the Miliana municipality (Abdellah Righi, 2012, p. 18).

The family hails from the city of Meliana until the grandfather, Hamed Ben El Hadj Mohamed Ben Hamed, settled in Relizane. His father, Mohamed, worked as a labourer in agriculture as a day labourer when he continued his evening classes at the primary school for boys Victor Hugo,

where he could master the French language, especially various mathematical operations that benefited him in his professional activities, when he met Moulay Ali Ouled Ben Yemna They were in the same situation. They shared the same ambition, so they pooled their savings, formed a partnership, and worked as hawkers and retailers of vegetables until their activities developed. They opened an office whose management was entrusted to Mohamed Francis, who was interested in accounting and was strict in spending. He passed this trait on to his children. The agency is located on Hospital Street opposite the covered market in Relizane (Abdellah Righi, 2012, p. 23). This rigorous policy allowed the two partners to accumulate a considerable fortune in twenty years, buying real estate (Abdellah Righi, 2012, p. 24) and becoming part of the bourgeoisie and notables of the city of Relizane.

2. The personality of Ahmed Francis:

He was born on November 12, 1910, in the middle of a peasant family tied to the land, and he was raised by Foudel Moulay, a follower of Zawiya Bouabdelia, along with his older brother Abdelkader. This lawyer (Bouhend, December 2017, p. 166) attended primary school in Relizane and then moved to Ardaillon High School in Oran in 1924, then chose medicine and registered at the University of Algiers, and in the fourth year, he registered at the

medical school in Paris in 1934 and was crowned with a certificate of competence in 1937. He settled in Setif in 1940.

His political activism began in 1933 when he enrolled in medical school and was trained in the student trade union struggle at the Association of Muslim Students of North Africa (AEMNAF), headed by Ferhat Abbas. 1934, he joined the Committee for the Defense of Muslim Freedoms in Algiers. He resumed his trade union activities in France and was vice president of the North African Muslim Students Association in France from 1934 to 1935 (Benjamin Stora, 1985, p. 345), headed by law student Ahmed Boumendjel.

In 1940, he opened his clinic in Setif and became closer to Farhat Abbas, co-writing the Algerian People's Manifesto on February 10, 1943, and was one of the Friends of the Manifesto and Freedom leaders on May 14, 1944 (Amar, 1961, p. 163). On February 04 1945, he founded the party's branch in Relizane, was arrested with the dissolution of the movement after the massacres of May 08, 1945, in El Harrach prison, then transferred to the south of Oranie in Kenadsa, Bechar, and was released on May 16, 1946, under the amnesty law, to return to Relizane and open a medical clinic on the first floor of Pierre Samar Street, opposite the covered market in the city. He then moved to the capital, where he resumed his political activity. Together with Farhat Abbas, he helped found the Democratic Union of the

Algerian Manifesto in April 1946 and the Algerian Republic (La République Algérienne), and before that, he helped edit the newspaper Legality.

The Democratic Union of Algerian Manifesto participated in the elections of the Second Constituent Assembly in Paris on June 02 1946. Ahmed Francis was among the representatives of the province of Oran. Of the 13 seats reserved for Muslims, the Union won 09 seats. Ahmed Francis, deputy for the Democratic Union of Algerian Manifesto, "enriched his political experience by spending months in the semicircular hall of the French National Assembly, expanding his circle of acquaintances by meeting the political men of that era, quickly learning the threads of parliamentary practice, training in the art of public speaking from the deputies' seats, and learning not to get confused before a hostile and hostile assembly (Abdellah Righi, 2012, p. 69). As Mahfoud Kaddach pointed out, these elected officials have been the spokespersons of Algerian nationalism for 116 years, making bold statements in a room unaccustomed to hearing nationalist colonisers, refusing to be regarded as French, and opposing the French presence (Kaddache et Djilali Sari, 1969, p. 94). During the first elections to the Algerian Assembly on April 04 1948, Ahmed Francis won for his party in the fourth electoral district of the second electoral college in the mixed municipality of Ami Moussa in the Oran municipality (A

.N.O.M: 92 E 258 Oran, Élus, Second Collège, Préfecture d'Oran, Elections). Indeed, in the Algerian Assembly, where he sat for eight consecutive years, Dr Francis proved himself to be a man of action in the Carnot Palace*, a skilled negotiator behind the scenes, a sober orator uncompromising in his principles, and sometimes a biting satirist (Abdellah Righi, 2012, p. 73).

Fathi El-Dib mentioned in his memoirs: 'Dr Ahmed Francis, secretary general of the Manifesto Party, is considered the most brilliant figure who has a total influence on Ferhat Abbas, who is broad-minded, hard-headed, calm, thoughtful, and does not agree to the principle of accepting a compromise despite his former boss Ferhat Abbas's belief in it (Fathi, 1990, p. 393) Jean Vaujour, ex-governor and ex-director of public security in Algiers, recalls: 'Ahmed Francis was perceived by the police as a hot-tempered, irascible, opinionated man - in short, uncontrollable - and rightly so. He was in the wrong direction; as the administration viewed him with suspicion, many administrators, and even general government managers, told me that they preferred Ferhat Abbas because he undoubtedly had a long political past and, at the same time, had to make some minor concessions to manoeuvre those whom they believed had the power to manoeuvre better for him, Ahmed Francis had practically no political work other than

vigorous opposition, especially during debates in the Finance Committee, of which he was a member, to anything to do with colonialism.. (Jean, 1985, p. 49)

3. *Joining the National Liberation Front (FLN):*

During his visit to France with Ahmed Francis on August 30 1954, Ferhat Abbas reported that they had contacted Prime Minister Mandés France, Interior Minister François Mitterrand, and Jacques Chevalier. Ferhat Abbas told the President of the French National Assembly: 'Algeria is silent because it is complaining; It does not trust officials who cannot enforce French laws, and our calls remain unanswered, so Algeria will go elsewhere (Lacouture, 1961, p. 308).

Mendes-France's statement on the eve of the start of the Liberation Revolution was a blow to the trend that Francis was representing: 'Algeria is French. The latter declared on November 24 1954, representing his bloc, accusing the French occupation policy of what happened on November 01 1954 and France's inability to find the solutions that Algerians have always demanded. He proposed the proposals contained in the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto and said that the peace that the French government was preparing was the peace of the graves (Lacouture, 1961, p. 309).

Faced with the breakdown of the language of dialogue and the lack of solutions to the sterile policy, the representatives of the bloc resigned from the parliamentary councils, which affected the policy of Jacques Soustelle in Algeria, so that Farhat Abbas and Ahmed Francis met on December 08 1955 with Abban Ramadan in the capital in Parc Galland. Ferhat Abbas mentions this occurred on Thursday around 3:00 p.m (Ferhat, 1984, p. 151). The car stopped near Francis's house. The dialogue continued until about half past eight; he embraced the ideology adopted by the FLN and left Algeria on April 07 1956, heading to Paris and then to Switzerland, where he met Ahmed Boumendjel, a childhood friend in Relizane. Expressing the attitude of his friend Francis, Ferhat Abbas said: 'The page of my life is closed, and the language of dialogue between the French and Muslims has ended, only the struggle with our brothers in the FLN for the honour of our country remains (Benjamin Stora, 1985, p. 151)' He joined its Cairo office with Farhat Abbas on April 26 1956. From this date, Ahmed Francis' activity abroad in favour of the Algerian Revolution and the FLN negotiator began to highlight the justice of the Algerian cause and gain more significant pressure on France diplomatically to submit to the demands of the FLN from Tripoli to Syria to Switzerland, Belgium and Cairo, the first of which was the first meetings of talks that brought together Amhamed Yazid and

Ahmed Francis with Pierre Commun, Acting Secretary General of the French Socialist Party headed by Guy Molet on July 21 1956 (Ben Youssef Ben Kheda, 1987, p. 15), In June 1957, he and Abdelrahman Kiwan toured in favour of the Algerian revolution in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In July 1957, they held information rallies in Scandinavia on the struggle of the Algerian people (Abdellah Righi, 2012, p. 103). In the first Algerian provisional government, he took over the Ministry of Economic and Financial Affairs; he was a financial expert in discussing and analyzing Algeria's budget when he was a delegate to the Algerian Assembly of the Democratic Union of Algerian Manifesto (UDPM).

4. Ahmed Francis as Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs:

Under the Algerian interim government, Ahmed Francis achieved several achievements as head of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, including the collection of financial funds and political and diplomatic support, especially from Arab countries; on February 12 1959, he visited Libya as part of a delegation led by Ferhat Abbas, where the Committee to Assist the Struggle of the Algerian People delivered financial assistance to the National Liberation Front. He then went with another delegation to Saudi Arabia. He was received on March 08 1959, in Riyadh by King Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, who contributed a

large part of the budget of the Algerian provisional government. After meeting Gamal Abdel Nasser in April 1959, the delegation visited Iraq from 18 to April 21 1959, where the delegation was received by President Abdel Karim Al Qasim and received a significant financial contribution, then to Kuwait and Sudan, and on May 27 1959 to Jordan and was received by King Hussein and then to Jerusalem... Despite the disagreements that prevailed during this phase within the revolution and the power struggles, it achieved diplomatic victories abroad through Ahmed Francis, Amhamed Yazid, Saad Dahleb... In the second composition of the provisional government on January 22 1960, he also became the head of the Ministry of Finance. He contributed to collecting financial aid from Arab and Islamic countries and those supporting the Algerian cause. He visited Beijing on April 30 1960, in a delegation headed by Karim Belkacem, where China granted aid in the form of money and arms in addition to political and diplomatic support, then to Vietnam and North Korea in May 1960 and then to Moscow on May 20 1960, where they granted the provisional government five million dollars.

In February 1961, Finance Minister Ahmed Francis and Saad Dahleb, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, travelled to Czechoslovakia, where they visited the Skoda factory in Plzen. From 28 to March 29 1961, Francis stayed in Sofia,

Bulgaria, where he signed an agreement involving one million dollars in financial aid and tonnes of supplies, mainly food and clothing, for the military; in April 1961, he travelled with Ferhat Abbas and a delegation consisting of Ben Toubal, Mehri, Boussouf... went to Yugoslavia and met with Marechal Tito on April 12 1961 (Abdellah Righi, 2012, p. 203) 'Dr Ahmed Francis was present in all delegations, as financial assistance was essential at the time,' says Saad Dahlab in his memoir, *Mission Accomplished* (Dahleb, 2007, p. 99), the financial resources multiplied, primarily from Arab and socialist countries, and the FLN became a real diplomatic force around the world.

5. The diplomatic role of Dr Ahmed Francis in the negotiations dossier 1958-1962:

With the arrival of General de Gaulle to power in France, Algeria's military and political plans changed. The French army was further strengthened, and many military operations were launched from May 1958 to 1960. The intensity of the war reached its peak in 1958 with the tight closure of the eastern and western borders in Algeria through the Chal and Maurice lines to prevent the infiltration of mujahideen, weapons, ammunition, and supplies, as well as the sealing of the eastern and western borders in Algeria through the Chal and Maurice lines. The Algerian provisional government viewed De Gaulle's initial speeches as a declaration

of ongoing war. In 1959, facing international pressure and Algerian resistance, the French government recognized the futility of military force and began seeking alternative solutions. I first proposed the 'Peace of the Braves' plan to protect French interests in Algeria, which the Algerian interim government rejected. On September 16, 1959, General de Gaulle announced the principle of self-determination. He did not acknowledge Algeria's national unity or territorial integrity and refused to negotiate with the leaders of the struggle or FLN officials who feigned acceptance of self-determination. The Algerian provisional government responded to the French government through a document drafted by Dr Ahmed Francis, expressing its readiness to negotiate for independence. It stated that negotiations would depend on the withdrawal of the French army from Algeria, that a free referendum could not occur under occupation, and that the Sahara was an essential part of an independent Algeria (Hamid, 2007, p. 227). The FLN, through its representatives, imposes itself from the outset as an independent negotiator by the principles set out in the Declaration of November 01 1954, deriving its legitimacy from the struggle of the Algerian people, without reference to any authority other than its own, independent of its political decision, and without seeking assistance from any party in programming its decisions during the preparation of the negotiations file.

On November 10 1959, General de Gaulle invited the leaders of the Algerian Revolution to meet in France so that the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic worked to put de Gaulle to the test to avoid losing world opinion and to maintain its conditions that the meeting be in a neutral country, during which de Gaulle showed bad faith, then came the Moulin discussions on June 26 1960, which the Algerian Provisional Government stopped. The secret negotiations between the two parties resumed in Switzerland at a time that the interim government attended the regular session of the United Nations General Assembly in December 1960 in a delegation headed by Karim Belkacem, consisting of Finance Minister Ahmed Francis, coinciding with the demonstrations of December 11, which gave a strong impetus to the negotiators to demand severe and formal negotiations.

Indeed, at its 15th session, the General Assembly ratified Resolution 1514 on the right of the Algerian people to self-determination. After many manoeuvres, the talks were ratified on March 30 1961, through a press release published simultaneously in Paris and Tunis, which announced the official opening of negotiations on April 07 1961, in Evian. The first date was cancelled following Louis Jukes' announcement in Oran regarding talks with the Algerian National Movement led by Massali Hadj (in agreement with the FLN); Algeria's

provisional government used the postponement to prepare its negotiation dossier.

6. Ahmed Francis's report to General Tito during the Yugoslav-Algerian discussions on April 12, 1961:

Based on the minutes of the Algerian-Yugoslav discussions of April 12 1961, in Belgrade, which brought together the Yugoslav and Algerian delegations, whose members included Dr Ahmed Francis, who, at the request of Marechal Tito, made a presentation on the status of the ongoing Algerian-French negotiations. Ahmed Francis was chosen for this challenging mission because of his familiarity with the subject and his close follow-up of the dossier so that he could make the points transparently; he says, 'I will be brief to give you an idea of our negotiating policy. You have to go back to the Moulin discussions and maybe even further back. Of all the heads of government who have succeeded France, the most dangerous for us is General de Gaulle. He came to power to give France a great position in the international arena.' (Harbi, 1981, p. 508) He introduced a new style of politics and took very seductive initiatives abroad. As for Algeria, as soon as he came to power, he abandoned the myth of French Algeria, a new idea with which he tried to win public opinion for his new colonial ideas. He was talking about this when he talked about both self-determination and association, but we must

admit that his skill caused great difficulty with international public opinion.

After the September 16 declaration on self-determination, many of the Friends of the struggling Algeria urged us to leave for Paris, believing that the Algerian issue had been practically resolved. When we replied that we were asking for guarantees, they told us that the dynamics of the negotiations would end by putting the issue in its proper context: the political context... In a declaration on June 14, General de Gaulle invited representatives of the Algerian provisional government to Paris to discuss the fate of the combatants. Indeed, we travelled to Moulin first to dispel the myth that de Gaulle had come for peace (Harbi, 1981, p. 509).

Our envoys were in charge of preparing the voyage of the delegation that was to negotiate with the French government, and the first contacts helped to confirm the evil intentions of General de Gaulle, who had no desire to negotiate but wanted the unconditional submission of the National Liberation Army (ALN). After understanding that General de Gaulle was not genuinely interested in negotiating for peace in Algeria, we needed to change our approach to get him back on track. That's why we suggested having the referendum supervised by the UN, even though we were aware of the UN's involvement in the Congo, which made us distrustful of the organization. But we also knew, on the one hand, that General de Gaulle was wary of

internationalizing the Algerian issue and, on the other hand, that our proposal would explode the contradictions that prevail among the friends of France. Furthermore, we aimed to prompt the French-speaking African nations to reveal their positions before their admission to the UN body, which France was anticipated to manipulate in its interest. We publicly disclosed our stance to proactively prevent any interference from these countries in the referendum organization (Harbi, 1981, p. 509).

In a report to General Tito, Ahmed Francis stated that the demonstrations in Algeria in support of the policies of the Algerian provisional government prompted the French government to organize a referendum on January 09. The French government concentrated its election campaign during the referendum on the negotiations. This led to the opening of discussions without preconditions. Secret contacts were held in Switzerland at the end of January; before Masmoudi travelled to Paris; secret contacts took place in Switzerland on February 20 before President Bourguiba departed for Paris. Some details must be given about the role played by the Tunisian president during this period leading up to the negotiations (Harbi, 1981, p. 509).

President Bourguiba was eager to meet de Gaulle, but whether he was invited or requested the meeting, himself is still being determined. The Algerian

provisional government was consulted regarding Bourguiba's trip to Paris. While we did not actively encourage Tunisian leaders to travel, we refrained from advising against it for understandable reasons. However, we did ask our Tunisian counterparts not to speak on behalf of the Algerian provisional government, driven by two clear motives for this position:

- The Algerian provisional government had established relations with the French separately from the Tunisians.
- The Algerian interim government was urging Arab countries to sever diplomatic relations with France, which we felt was enough to prevent President Bourguiba from travelling to Paris.

Hence, we did not partake in Bourguiba's effort, nor were we associated with the excitement in the French and international media regarding the Tunisian president's visit, which was believed to resolve the Algerian situation and, in a broader sense, all lingering issues between France and North Africa (Harbi, 1981, p. 509).

Francis is questioning the purpose of this travel and the significant role of the extensive media coverage surrounding it. The explanation becomes apparent when we consider General de Gaulle's tactics, which involved isolating Algeria from the rest of North Africa and its neighbouring countries while hinting at the possibility of

sharing the wealth of the Sahara with them. Bourguiba's declaration on his departure from Rambouillet, in which he mentioned General de Gaulle's good intentions and, on the contrary, the Algerian government's bad intentions, is sufficient to illustrate the feelings of our Tunisian brothers towards us (Harbi, 1981, p. 510).

In a separate manifesto delivered by President Bourguiba to the National Assembly on April 06 within the same political context, he proposed that the resolution of the Sahara conflict be postponed to a later date, aligning closely with General de Gaulle's perspective. General de Gaulle aimed to prompt discussions on the issue of northern Algeria with the Algerian provisional government; this means recognising, from the outset, that the Sahara is not Algerian. In the same context, I would like to point out that the Moroccan government, in a statement made by Alaoui, the Moroccan Minister of Information, about the Sahara, and the same applies to Nigerian officials, and there is no doubt that General de Gaulle inspired all these manoeuvres and statements (Harbi, 1981, p. 510). Francis asks if there is an American influence in these situations. It is difficult to answer a definitive yes, but we must not forget that American companies have invested in the Sahara, and Americans have never publicly expressed their opinion on Algeria's territorial integrity.

Nevertheless, the publicity surrounding Bourguiba's upcoming trip to America is significant. The trips, declarations, and manoeuvres are all aimed at the same goal: pressuring the Algerians to agree to a round table on the Sahara. We remain vigilant because we know that this manoeuvring atmosphere will continue during the negotiations if they start in the next few days (Harbi, 1981, p. 510). Francis says the contacts between 05 and 08 March confirm France's intentions. During contacts between the two governments' envoys on February 20, the French suggested that the truce should be discussed first, followed by political guarantees. Our response was to discuss political guarantees first and then the ceasefire. During these same talks, the French envoys spoke of their government's sovereignty over the Sahara, and our envoys insisted that Algeria's territorial integrity, including the Sahara, could not be compromised. Another French demand was to make Mers El Kébir an Enclave with a status similar to Gibraltar; we also said no to this request, and the French and our envoys also had to discuss another issue: the interlocutor question. Another French demand was to make Mers El Kébir an Enclave with a status similar to Gibraltar; we also said no to this request. For the French, it was a matter of dialogue with all tendencies, but for us, de Gaulle represents those tendencies that were nothing but subtle conflicts within the French framework, anything that is colonial. The

Algerian Provisional Government alone represented the aspirations of the Algerian people. We explained to our interlocutors that General de Gaulle was free to consult with whomever he wished, but we could only accept one negotiating table (Harbi, 1981, p. 510).

The two envoys agreed to reconvene on March 05 before returning to report to their respective governments. Ferhat Abbas, head of the provisional government in Algeria, noted that the situation of imprisoned ministers was also addressed during their discussions; at the meetings held on 05 and 08 March, the French agreed that further meetings between the delegations would be chaired by the Prime Minister and made it clear that they intended to hold talks only with the Algerian provisional government; our interlocutors also abandoned their previous position on the truce and suggested that the delegations meet without a pre-determined agenda. During the talks, it was also agreed that the discussions between the delegations at the ministerial level would focus on both military and political issues, and the date and venue of the conference was decided on April 07 in Evian (Harbi, 1981, p. 511).

The Algerian envoys requested and obtained from their interlocutor that the delegation of the Algerian provisional government to Evian be based in Switzerland; this was to allow them the freedom to reveal de Gaulle's manoeuvres

and demonstrate the representative nature of the Algerian provisional government, for the same reason, we refused the French transport, and the Algerian delegation to Evian was to use the Swiss transport. In addition, arrangements were made for joint meetings between the Algerian and French police services to organize the security of the delegations in agreement with the Swiss authorities (Harbi, 1981, p. 511) It was decided during the meeting to issue a simultaneous press release in Paris and Tunis announcing the date and location of the conference opening. Therefore, we were not too surprised to learn on March 28 that Messali El Hadj's declaration came at the same time as the FLN announced that the negotiations would take place in Evian. We alerted the Swiss about this manoeuvre that could jeopardize everything, but the French dismissed our warnings. On March 30, Louis Joxe announced that the French government was preparing to consult with the M.N.A. as with the FLN (Harbi, 1981, p. 511). Redha Malek says in this regard: "Everything was ready to go on April 07 when Louis Jukes made a statement in Oran on March 30 that caused panic in the ranks of the Algerian provisional government; he said, "I have met with elected representatives of parliament, heads of public councils, and elected representatives of chambers of commerce, agriculture, and industry. I want to give the word 'consultation' its full meaning on my trip. I will meet with the Algerian National Movement and the National Liberation

Front (Rédha, 2001, p. 104). The Algerian provisional government currently believes that our delegation cannot go to Evian until it receives clarification from the French. Regarding the resumption of contact, no gesture could be interpreted as a desire by the French to abandon their demands. There is also nothing new in General de Gaulle's congress on April 11 (Harbi, 1981, p. 511).

This excerpt shows the extent of the manoeuvring and bargaining that France subjected the Algerian side to in the negotiations, the genius of the Algerian commissioner, to which Francis was a party, including the preparation and drafting of the report, which reveals familiarity with the file in its local and international context on the one hand, and the non-acceptance of any concession on the unity of the national territory, which France tried to invest in it, especially with neighbouring countries and urging a multilateral table through which demands and the unity of the Algerian nation would be dispersed.

7. Francis's role in preparing for the negotiations in April 1961 :

In a charged atmosphere, diplomatically and politically, and to prepare for the negotiations, the provisional government commissioned a committee headed by Dr Ahmed Francis to prepare an accurate dossier, Redha Malek recalls: " On April 20, 1961, at the same

time that a new date of May 10 was proposed for negotiations, the provisional government entrusted Ahmed Francis with preparing a dossier for the talks. A committee chaired by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, assembled quickly, aims to develop a tactical approach and position on each of the key issues and identify those that may arise during the talks. The committee must work quickly; it has one week to submit its report. Military matters are assigned directly to the General Staff, which will be dedicated to developing a general program, even if that means referring each specific issue to a specialized subcommittee (Rédha, 2001, pp. 108-109). Francis was faced with a monumental task, with only a week left to complete the work that would determine the future of the Algerian people. The gravity of this responsibility was further underscored when the French generals staged a coup in the capital on April 21, 1961. This compelled Francis's committee to revise the report, highlighting the main points on which the Algerian negotiators were resolute—self-determination, national unity, and territorial integrity—while also identifying secondary aspects that could be open to negotiation.

A. The works of the Francis Committee to prepare the negotiations file, April 1961.

The Commission, chaired by Francis, submitted its report to the Algerian

Provisional Government on April 29 1961. It examined the various hypotheses regarding the direction of the negotiations, whether it would be necessary to discuss exclusively the conditions for the implementation of self-determination or whether it would be better to move on to the substance, namely independence and the future relationship between Algeria and France (Rédha, 2001, p. 111). The text stresses that the discussion should centre on self-determination as a tactical precondition without rejecting talks on future prospects, which requires the preparation of specific files related to each issue. It also stresses that recourse to self-determination should be a permanent weapon the Algerian negotiators use every time the discussion on substance turns unfavourable. The report emphasizes that political discussions, including those on self-determination or content, should precede any conversations about a potential ceasefire. The suggestion put forth by Georges Pompidou that a ceasefire agreement should take precedence was dismissed. The report highlighted that even if this delayed the announcement of a ceasefire, it would only be deemed acceptable once a political agreement had been achieved (Rédha, 2001, p. 112).

Regarding self-determination, it has been determined that there will be no discussion outside the issue of territorial integrity, which is fundamental, and that there is no point in moving on to other

guarantees before this issue is settled; the report pointed out that political sovereignty over the Sahara must be distinguished from exploitation, investments, and wealth distribution, which we will demonstrate tactically in terms of large-scale cooperation. This is where the rupture comes if the French, for their part, demonstrate their intransigence regarding their claims of political sovereignty over the Sahara (Rédha, 2001, p. 112). The report notes that General de Gaulle highlighted three main elements during his April 11, 1961 press conference.

- Distinctive economic and financial arrangements.

- Granting of bases in the framework of joint defence.

- Organized cooperation between ethnic groups.

Algeria sought both internal and external independence in this joint program, rejecting territorial enclaves (Mers El Kebir) and joint defence while demanding a timeline for the French army's withdrawal (Rédha, 2001, p. 112). Subcommittees have been established to compile files on the following topics: Economy and Finance, Sahara and Oil, Guarantees for Europeans, Rules and National Defense, and Transition; the horizons were outlined around key points of interest.

1. At the cultural level, Arabic is to be the only official and national language.

2. There are plans to revise the oil law and the way exploration and production licenses are granted, increase the Algerian state's share, make a share of oil available for marketing abroad, and sell oil and gas at low prices for domestic consumption.

3. Transition period The following criteria should be established as a framework:

- Executive Committee.

- Maintain the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic.

- The Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic does not participate in the Executive Committee comprising French, Algerians, FLN, and neutrals.

- The purpose of the transitional period is to administer the country and prepare for the referendum (Rédha, 2001, p. 112).

- Oversight of the central administration: retaining managers in their positions but augmenting them with competent Algerians to take over after them and considering the double signature of any administrative decision or action.

- Similarly, to improve regional and local administration, the number of Algerian governors, sub-governors, and municipal officials should be doubled, and

the principle of double signature at every level should be required.

- Replacing municipal councils with executive-appointed municipal committees.
- The complete and normal abolition of the Urban Administrative Services and the Specialized Administrative Services as an offshoot of the National Liberation Army (ALN).
- Referendum: It will be supervised internationally, not by the UN, and by neutral countries chosen by mutual agreement. It will apply to the entire Algerian territory, including the Sahara, and votes will be counted nationally and not by region. Tactically, to prevent Europeans from participating in the referendum, only two options will be offered for the ballot— Frenchisation or Independence (Rédha, 2001, p. 112)
- Detainees: Full and immediate release of all Algerians imprisoned in camps and prisons, accompanied by a general amnesty.
- The Executive Committee will supervise the police, prosecution, and prison administration (Rédha, 2001, p. 112).

After the report was ready, the Algerian delegation was formed, headed by Karim Belkacem, Vice-President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs,

accompanied by Ahmed Francis, Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs, Saad Dahlab, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ahmed Boumendjel, Director of Political Affairs at the Ministry of Information, Military Commanders Kaïd Ahmed and Ali Mendjeli of the Staff Command of the National Liberation Army, Taïeb Boulahrouf, FLN representative in Rome, Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Director of the Office of the President of the Algerian Provisional Government, and Redha Malek, in charge of relations with the press (Rédha, 2001, p. 122). The delegation flew from Tunis Airport on May 18 1961, at 14:30 to Switzerland; three hours later, they arrived near Geneva, Switzerland, where they stayed at the Château du Bois d'Avault, a palace belonging to the King of Qatar; on May 20, 1961, in Evian, they met with a prominent French delegation led by Louis Joxe, Minister of Algerian Affairs. The delegation included State Counselor Roland Cadet, General Jean Victor Simon, head of the Tizi Ouzou military sector, General De Gaulle's General Counsel Bernard Tricot, diplomat Claude Chayet, Louis Joxe's chief of staff Vincent Labouret, Colonel Seguin Pazzis, General De Gaulle's aide, and Finance Inspector Billecart, Negotiations commenced but stalled over three key issues: the timing of a ceasefire relative to the political agreement, the choice between Algerian or French Sahara, and the status of the

European minority regarding privileges, dual nationality, and guaranteed rights.

On 2 and 3 June 1961, Francis, Dahlab, and Boumenjel responded to the French side's claim that the Sahara could not be separated from Algeria because of the intermingling of populations dating back to before 1830 and beyond. On 2 and 3 June 1961, Francis, Dahlab, and Boumenjel responded to the French side's claim that the Sahara could not be separated from Algeria because of the intermingling of populations dating back to before 1830 and beyond, the common struggle against the French invasion, as evidenced by the current resistance across the Sahara, confirms the territorial and political unity of the national territory, as even the evidence from the French legal arsenal itself points in this direction (Rédha, 2001, pp. 136-137). Negotiations were suspended on June 13, 1961, at the French government's initiative, only to resume on July 20, 1961, in Luzern in the absence of the representatives of the General Staff of the National Liberation Army (ALN), Kaïd Ahmed and Ali Mendjeli, and on June 30 1961, based on the report of the negotiating delegation, Ferhat Abbas appealed to the Algerian people to declare Wednesday, July 05, 1961, a national day against partition, negotiations stalled once more over the issue of the unity of the Algerian Sahara and the European minority and were halted

on July 28 1961 at the behest of the Algerian provisional government.

The preparation of the negotiation file by Dr. Ahmed Francis on behalf of the delegation of the Algerian provisional government has indeed charted a strategy that reflects full knowledge of the facts, and he e could define the approach and the most important major points toward negotiations and the transitional phase towards an independent Algeria within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as he anticipated the French responses to any question and then visualized the opponent's reaction and then attacked.

Conclusion :

Ahmed Francis is one of the national figures who dedicated his life to serving the national cause during the national movement. He represented Algerians in the Algerian Parliament and the French Assembly, Then acted as a voice in international forums and travelled to Arab and foreign capitals seeking financial funds, material assistance, and political and diplomatic support for the Algerian revolution. He displayed a unique genius in dealing with the negotiations file by standing up to de Gaulle's manoeuvres and bargaining because of his familiarity with the file. He was a strong opponent and fierce defender of the fundamentals of the Algerian nation and its territorial integrity. During all stages of negotiations,

especially in Evian I, he contributed to drawing the contours of the Algerian state according to the foundations of full national sovereignty.

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