

AFRICA-UN BULLETIN

Issued by: The American Committee on Africa, Inc.
4 West 40th Street
New York 18, New York

George M. Houser
Executive Director
A. C. Thompson
Representative to UN

No. 4

February 8, 1957

ALGERIA: FRENCH TRAGEDY: AMERICAN DILEMMA

French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau, in New York to present his government's position on the Algerian "question," reintroduced this year by members of the Asian-African bloc, reiterated to the UN that his government will not recognize any UN resolutions affecting Algeria, which is considered an integral part of France and therefore a purely domestic matter. The French have agreed to inclusion of the item on the General Assembly's agenda this year (in contrast to last year's walk-out over such inclusion), he stated, only to allow France to reply to vilification of its policies and to object to interference in Algeria by Egypt and other governments. Nevertheless, he repeated the French offer of a cease-fire in Algeria, to be followed by various improvements (set forth in the Africa-UN Bulletin of January 21), and he supplemented this with a vague program for the development of a future Eurafrican community, including Tunisia and Morocco.

In the rebellious Departments of Algeria the French have grabbed a bear by the tail; and the succession of proposals emanating from Paris over the past couple of years, all opposed either by the nationalist Algerians, the politically powerful and reactionary "colons," or both, and all modified by new, equally evanescent formulas, indicate that the French dare not let go and cannot hang on. It is probably true that emotionally the average Frenchman (including, albeit uneasily, most Communist Party members) feels that Algeria is as French as, say, Alsace (which has limited local autonomy) or Brittany (which has always been somewhat outside many main cultural and philosophical trends in France); and certainly only Algerian wheat and wine make possible the poor Frenchman's reasonably satisfying cuisine, his sole contact in many cases with a decent standard of living. Nevertheless, the French have been unable to treat Algeria as an integral part of France in large political and economic sectors: political representation has been consciously gerrymandered against the Algerians (lest metropolitan Frenchmen find themselves, with the projected ultimate extension of political representation to the rest of the French Union, outnumbered by non-Europeans in their own Parliament), and severely restricted to Algerians who renounce Moslem law (equivalent in the eyes of many of the faithful to renouncing their religion); moreover, the French have been forced by their lack of capital to classify Algeria, with other colonies, as overseas territories available for foreign investment (though political instability has discouraged potential investors). Pineau's hopes for a future Eurafrican community do not state how France plans to overcome these fundamental problems even with the best of goodwill and cooperation on the part of both nationalist and "colon" groups.

The American position vis-a-vis Algeria is hardly more comfortable than the French. If a complete breach between France and the backers of Algerian independence occurs, the United States will have to decide whether to back France in order to prevent its slipping into a "neutralist" anti-American attitude, which would virtually destroy NATO, and at the expense, necessarily, of relinquishing its newly assumed "anti-colonial" role, particularly in relation to peoples on the Mediterranean littoral. The American delegates can be expected to work feverishly behind the scenes to head off any explosion on the Algerian question.

The ACOA recommends that the United States support a United Nations "good offices" committee to help bring about negotiations between the French and representatives of the Algerian people, including the National Liberation Front.

SOUTH AFRICAN RACIAL POLICY -- TRIUMPH BY DEFAULT

The Union of South Africa has scored two substantial victories in the UN Special Political Committee this year. As reported in the Africa-UN Bulletin of January 21, the question of South African treatment of persons of Indian origin was handled by an innocuous resolution passed on January 9, which again called for negotiations between the Union and India and Pakistan. (The South African government has consistently refused to act on previous more strongly worded resolutions to substantially the same effect.) Subsequently, on January 21, the Special Political Committee adopted an equally inoffensive resolution on the broader question of racial conflict arising from the Union's policy of apartheid. The resolution, after noting in its preamble that apartheid is based on racial discrimination, which is contrary to the expressed purposes of the UN, deplors the Union's racial policies, exhorts it to revise them, invites it to take a more constructive approach to the question, particularly by its presence in the UN, and requests the Secretary General to communicate with the Union government as appropriate "to carry forward the purposes of this resolution." This resolution represented a compromise between a harsher draft introduced by Ceylon, Greece, Haiti, Iran, and Iraq, and an even gentler one suggested by the Philippines in a spirit of "conciliation." The Philippines delegation, backed by the Japanese, among others, indicated that the purpose of the new resolution was to secure the "good will" of the Union by avoiding all controversial points and pointed criticism and by extending a "friendly hand" to the South Africans; the need to bring the Union "back into this world forum" was stressed by the delegate from Colombia.

The resolution was finally approved by 55 votes for and 5 against, with 10 abstentions. Negative votes were cast by Australia, Belgium, France, Portugal, and the United Kingdom, on the grounds that it constituted interference in the domestic affairs of South Africa. The United States abstained on the grounds that while this country disapproved of South African racial policy, the resolution did not offer any constructive proposal to improve the situation. Ambassador Philip W. Bonsal, the American spokesman, made it clear that he hoped the question would not appear automatically on the agenda of the next session of the General Assembly, since continued criticism of South Africa would serve no useful purpose; but both the Uruguayan and Ethiopian delegates indicated that they thought further and different measures should be considered at the next session if this resolution failed to induce any changes. There was no attempt to reconstitute the Committee on the Racial Situation in South Africa (which the UN let lapse two years ago) in spite of the strong arguments advanced for its reestablishment by ACOA and other interested organizations.

The South African victory can be explained in part, at least, as the consequence of events in other parts of the world as well as of frustration, fatigue, and ennui arising out of previous unsuccessful attempts to deal with the same problem. In view of Russian defiance of UN resolutions regarding Hungary, Israeli defiance in the "Middle East," and Indian defiance in Kashmir, many of the normally active champions of the oppressed Africans were in no moral position to carry on an active campaign before the UN, and few delegates wished to tackle an additional, if less dramatic, problem which seemed doomed to failure. The question of sanctions was clearly too "hot" to raise in connection with the Union unless the UN was prepared to consider it in relation to other offending nations. In addition, it must be noted that established Indian businessmen in the Union tend to exercise a moderating influence on the Indian and Pakistani delegations, due to fear of economic reprisals, including confiscation. Informed reporters at the UN pointed out an unofficial Pakistani representative of business interests who was alleged to be lobbying for a "conciliatory" approach. And it cannot be forgotten that the South African Minister for External Affairs (who headed the delegation which "walked out" of the UN this year) announced to the current session of the Union Parliament that South African ports might be closed to Indian ships (which have been rounding the Cape since the Suez Canal was closed) if India continues its virulent attacks on South African racial

policy; he also indicated that South African uranium, chrome, and manganese, for which the United States is the chief customer, might be used in bettering its bargaining position at the UN.

INFORMATION CONCERNING NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Under Article 73(e) of Chapter 11 of the United Nations Charter, members which administer non-self-governing territories (which are not defined but are generally assumed to include all areas traditionally recognized as "colonies" unless emancipated or designated trust territories) are obligated to submit reports on the economic, social, and educational conditions in their territories to the UN Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories. The problems facing this Committee and the UN in connection with Article 73(e) include: (1) omission of a definition of non-self-governing territories, so that no reports are received from certain areas which, although generally considered "colonial," are legally considered integral parts of the mother country; (2) lack of any coercive power to compel needed improvements or changes in specified territories; (3) inability to require reports on political developments in non-self-governing territories; and (4) lack of any method to utilize reports which could be furnished by unofficial ("nongovernmental") agencies.

The Fourth Committee is currently considering the first of these problems as the consequence of receipt of information from Portugal (a newly admitted UN member) that claims it has no territories to which Article 73(e) applies, since Portugal is a unitary state and Angola, Mozambique, and other "colonies" are legally and constitutionally equal to provinces of metropolitan Portugal. (See the discussion of this anticipated approach in the Bulletin of December 7.) Dissatisfied by the Portuguese answer, Ceylon, Greece, Liberia, Nepal, and Syria introduced a relatively mild resolution calling for the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to study the application of Charter provisions on non-self-governing territories to newly (1955 and 1956) admitted members and report to the next session of the General Assembly. The Resolution was passed February 5 over the opposition of Brazil, a former Portuguese colony or province, which referred to the "civilizing mission" of the former mother country (Brazil was the seat of the Portuguese government during the Napoleonic era), of Spain (which is expected to respond similarly to the request for information about its "colonies"), and of the colonial powers and many other European governments, including some which alleged that the resolution discriminated against newly admitted countries (at its commencement the UN did not challenge the replies of any of the founding countries as to the existence of non-self-governing territories under their administration).

Benjamin Gerig, the American representative, opposed the resolution on the grounds that interpretation of Charter provisions relating to non-self-governing territories was from the beginning left to the individual members, and that no sovereign state would allow an outside power to interfere in this respect; noting that the United States had been scrupulous in abiding by the Article and liberal in interpreting its requirements, he advised members to act so as to set a moral example which would be voluntarily followed rather than try to impose compliance with a specific concept.

The ACOA believes that the American position on this issue is wrong and that the provisions of Article 73 ought to be interpreted primarily for the protection and advancement of any peoples who are non-self-governing in fact.

FRENCH CAMEROONS -- FOLLOWING THE TOGOLAND PATTERN?

The political history of the former German Cameroon colony is in many respects similar to that of the former German Togo colony: it was split into two mandates under the League of Nations, one administered by the British (whose Nigerian

colony adjoined the Cameroons) and the other by the French (whose great Equatorial African territory abuts the east and north Cameroon border). Both mandates became trust territories after World War II. With Nigerian independence apparently assured in the near future (and with it a possible change in the status of the British Cameroons, whether or not similar to that approved for British Togoland upon independence for the Gold Coast), the French government has begun a political change in its Cameroons Trust Territory similar to the one undertaken in French Togoland over the last few years. In 1956 the French government extended universal suffrage to the French Cameroons (as it did to French Togoland), and a new Cameroons Legislature was subsequently elected by the enfranchised populace. The French then proposed a new statute (similar, apparently, in many respects to the organic law creating the "Autonomous Togo Republic" in the French Union) to create a semi-autonomous Cameroons government, and have submitted it to the Cameroons Legislature for consideration and approval. The French have not yet, however, proposed an end to trusteeship based on the changed status of the Territory.

French action in the Cameroons, as well as in Togoland, has provoked violent reactions on the part of Africans living in the Territory, and the UN has been deluged by petitions from innumerable political organizations. The petitioners have alleged rigged registration lists and choices of candidates as well as election frauds; interference by both British and French governments (presumably collusive) with the petitioners' right to appear before the UN by refusing or delaying passports and other necessary travel documents and by arrests on trumped-up charges; and violent repression of opposition groups, particularly those allegedly responsible for local boycotts of recent elections. Some of the Cameroons representatives seek union of the two Trust Territories in a free Cameroons state, but the number and variety of petitions is legion.

HUMAN RIGHTS: CONSIDERATION OF SELF-DETERMINATION POSTPONED

The controversial and somewhat vague concept of the "right of self-determination" relates to the control of natural resources by indigenous peoples. It is therefore of particular concern to African and other colonial subjects who have often alleged that the ruling powers, while claiming to industrialize and develop their countries, have in fact stripped them of their mineral wealth and plant and animal life. A draft covering self-determination among other human rights was prepared by the Third Committee at the last session of the General Assembly, but further consideration has now been postponed until the next session. Mrs. Oswald B. Lord, the American delegate, who, due to Congressional criticism, has been placed in the awkward position of sitting in on drafting sessions but nevertheless generally opposing treaties as an unworkable method of attaining or enlarging human rights, abstained on the vote to postpone further consideration of the matter at this session.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: "SUNFED:" UNITED STATES HOLDS BACK

The American government has again refused to contribute to the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development ("SUNFED") a sum of around one hundred million dollars to help support non-profit-earning projects such as hospitals, schools, roads, and housing for under-developed countries. Paul Hoffman, the American spokesman, stated that until the creation of genuine international confidence, with its consequent decline in military expenditures, the United States was unwilling to contribute even one-quarter of one percent of its proposed appropriations for national defense to this project. It is hoped that SUNFED will help produce higher living standards, thereby contributing to the decline of discontent and tension in the world. The ACOA advocates reversal of this position.

Apparently because of its agricultural surpluses, the United States has, however, sponsored a resolution calling for the establishment of national food

reserves; but even this is a severely limited proposition compared with the broad project for a "World Food Capital Fund" which has been proposed by other nations.

In the field of technical assistance generally, every African country could profit from the creation of an African Economic Committee similar to the European, Asian, and Latin American Committees established earlier by the UN to give expert advice and assistance in planning and carrying out programs for economic development, but it appears unlikely that funds will be set aside for such a committee. A pre-requisite for any development program is more, and more accurate, data than now exist on economic conditions; much of the necessary information can be obtained only by on-the-spot investigations by experts in Africa.

* * * * *

The Africa-UN Bulletin is issued as a public service without charge, although any contribution to help us meet expenses will of course be welcome. If you have not already indicated your desire to continue receiving the Bulletin, please return the slip below.

- - - - -
American Committee on Africa
4 West 40th Street
New York 18, New York

Please put me on the list to receive the Africa-UN Bulletin.

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

Others who might be interested in receiving this Bulletin are:

Name

Address

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____