

AFRICA-U.N.

BULLETIN

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

George M. Houser
Executive Director
A. C. Thompson
Representative to U.N.

No. 6

April 9, 1957

SUMMARY OF U.N. ACTIONS AFFECTING AFRICA * * * UNITED STATES POSITION EVALUATED

The Eleventh Session of the UN General Assembly opened Nov. 12, 1956 and adjourned March 8, 1957. During that period the UN considered, by ACOA count, 12 major questions affecting Africa (as well as many other matters--such as SUNFED, technical and educational assistance for underdeveloped countries--which are applicable to Africa as well as to other large sections of the world).

Unfortunately, for many African peoples, attention was concentrated to such an extent on the urgent and immediate problems of Hungary and Suez that other questions, especially the complicated and difficult ones, were swept under the diplomatic rug, so to speak, by deferment or by high-sounding but ineffectual resolutions. In particular, the long-standing questions involving South Africa, South West Africa, and the Ethiopian-Somali border were asked to solve themselves without disturbing the delegates' more pressing considerations. On the other hand, when there was no escape from action, as in the Algerian "question," a reasonably satisfactory and even statesmanlike resolution was adopted under conditions which may assist a peaceful solution. The affairs of African trust territories, except South West Africa (and, as noted in the summary below, Somalia), received careful and usually sympathetic consideration from the General Assembly, and some progress toward self-government was backed from the Togolands in the west to Tanganyika in the east. In contrast, the non-self-governing territories, which are the step-children of the UN Charter, were given little encouragement by the General Assembly.

A summary of UN action on the 12 major questions selected by the ACOA appears below:

Admission of new members:

Morocco, the Sudan, and Tunisia were admitted as new members of the UN at the beginning of this Session of the General Assembly, and Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast, with which British Togoland is united) was admitted at the conclusion of the Session. Admission of these nations was among the few universally approved actions of the Assembly.

British Togoland:

The General Assembly approved the British request to end the British Togoland Trusteeship and to permit the integration of the Territory into the new state of Ghana, in accordance with the results of a referendum supervised by the UN. Despite some misgivings as to the effect of this action on the possibility of a future union of British and French Togoland Territories, which many petitioners from both areas desired, the Assembly vote favoring the British request was 63 to 0.

French Togoland:

Apparently spurred by the developments in British Togoland, the French also requested approval of the end of the French Togoland Trusteeship and the establishment

of an "Autonomous Togoland Republic" within the French Union, in accordance with the results of a plebiscite conducted alone by the French Administration in the Territory after the UN had refused to supervise it. The Trusteeship Council, with the United States breaking the tie between the administering and non-administering powers, referred the entire question to the Fourth (Trusteeship) Committee. After hot debate, the Committee passed a resolution (subsequently approved by the General Assembly) to send a five-man commission to the Territory to study conditions and to report back to the Trusteeship Council. The original form of the resolution was considerably softened by amendments (proposed by the Western powers, which had originally introduced a resolution generally supporting the French request) to commend French steps toward self-government for the Togolese. The United States voted for the resolution.

Algeria:

The "question of Algeria"—by which the Asian-African bloc referred to French suppression of Algerian nationalism and refusal to grant self-government, and the French referred to Egyptian and other interference in internal French affairs—was resolved at this Session of the General Assembly by a resolution, unanimously adopted, expressing the hope that a solution could be found "in a spirit of cooperation...through appropriate means." While the resolution failed to recommend any specific steps (the French had announced in advance that they would not recognize any resolution on the subject), it apparently satisfied the Algerian representatives since it implicitly recognized UN competence as to the question which France had claimed to be solely a "domestic" matter. It is generally accepted that the French cannot help being influenced by the debate on the question, in which they often rose to defend their position although their delegates theoretically did not recognize the competence of the UN.

In the complicated parliamentary maneuvering preceding passage of the final compromise resolution, the United States backed a very much weaker one which in effect supported the French position.

South Africa—Apartheid:

In a compromise between a "conciliatory" approach backed by the Philippines and Japan and a fairly severe stand urged by Ceylon, Greece, Haiti, Iran, and Iraq, the General Assembly, by a vote of 55 to 5, passed a resolution deploring the Union's racial policies, inviting the Union to take a more constructive approach, particularly by its presence in the UN (this was apparently a reference to the South African delegation's "walk-out" over the inclusion of this and the following question on the Assembly's agenda), and requesting the Secretary-General to communicate with the Union to help carry out the resolution. The United States was among 10 countries which abstained on the resolution, on the ground that while it deplored racial discrimination, the resolution did not offer any constructive proposal. The United States did not offer any suggestion—only the hope that the UN would be spared another review of the problem next year—and it also refused to support reconstitution of the UN Commission on the Racial Situation in South Africa, which the ACOA supported. UN action represented a victory by default for South Africa.

South Africa—Treatment of Persons of Indian Origin:

The Union of South Africa won another victory on this issue as the General Assembly passed (also in the absence of the South African delegation) a resolution regretting the South African position on this question, without proposing any solution. The United States supported this resolution.

South West Africa:

On its tenth try, the UN General Assembly was still unable effectively to assert its jurisdiction over South West Africa, although the International Court has held

South West Africa to constitute a trust territory under the UN as successor to the League of Nations. The General Assembly, approving a resolution adopted by the Fourth Committee, noted and deplored the unsatisfactory conditions in the territory, referred testimony before it by two petitioners to the UN Committee on South West Africa, and directed the Committee to consider new courses of action by the UN. Rev. Michael Scott (who represents the Herero tribe) has since suggested to the Committee that the UN invoke the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court as to violations of the mandate agreement between the Union of South Africa and the UN (as successor to the League of Nations). Despite his request for expeditious consideration of this proposal, the Committee did not bring it before the Eleventh Session of the UN.

French Camerouns:

In a vote split between "colonial" and "anti-colonial" countries, the General Assembly passed a resolution hoping that France would restore normal political activity and reduce tensions in the Territory and directing that statements of all petitioners who had been heard—one of the grievances of all the petitioners was that the authorities had prevented many of them from appearing before the UN—be referred to the Trusteeship Council for further study and that the Council report thereon to the next Assembly. The United States voted for this resolution.

Information from non-self-governing territories:

By a very close vote the Fourth Committee passed a resolution directed at Portugal, which as a new member, had informed the UN that it had no colonies—Angola, Mozambique, etc., being considered legally as overseas provinces of exactly the same status as the metropolitan provinces. Essentially, the resolution establishes an ad hoc committee to study the application of the UN Charter provisions on non-self-governing territories to newly admitted members of the UN. The resolution was defeated in the Assembly by a tie vote of 35 to 35 (since a 2/3 vote is required). The United States opposed the resolution and was blamed by India for persuading several delegations to oppose it in the General Assembly.

Tanganyika:

In a tribute, at least in part, to the persuasive presentation of Julius Nyerere, president of the Tanganyika African National Union, who appeared before the Fourth Committee, the General Assembly voted to recommend that the British make a policy statement on the future of Tanganyika, including the principle of guidance toward self-government in an essentially African democratic state with equal rights for all, and to recommend that the Trusteeship Council study particularly the problem of Tanganyika's political development. The United States voted with the colonial and administrative powers against the resolution.

Hastening self-government for trust territories:

After deleting a paragraph stating that the General Assembly considered most trust territories fully capable of achieving self-government "in the near future," the General Assembly passed a Russian resolution, modified by Syria, recommending that the countries administering British and French Camerouns, French Togoland, Tanganyika, and Ruanda-Urundi take necessary steps to ensure self-government or independence for these trust territories "at the earliest possible date" (the Soviet Union had proposed within 3 to 5 years). The United States opposed the resolution along with ten European countries and Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Ethiopian-Somali border dispute:

Italian and Ethiopian reports to this Session of the General Assembly state that the negotiations to establish a permanent boundary between Ethiopia and the Italian

Trust Territory of Somaliland broke down last fall. Despite the importance of establishing the boundary before 1960, when Somalia becomes a new, independent country, and despite the long history of border trouble from the early days of Italian colonization in Somalia up to the post-World War II period, the General Assembly offered no assistance to the parties but merely passed a resolution urging continued negotiations with a proviso that if agreement is not reached, UN facilities for negotiation, mediation, and arbitration shall be used.

United States Position:

In evaluating the United States' position on all these issues, it is necessary to remember that each member of the UN plays two roles: one is its public role in voting, debating, and making its public statements on policy; the other is its behind-the-scenes role, lobbying, compromising, and bargaining. The first can be accurately reported and evaluated. The second cannot; it can only be guessed at and evaluated accordingly. There is, for example, considerable reason to believe that the United States, although publicly supporting the French position on Algeria, nevertheless worked conscientiously behind the scenes to persuade the French to take a moderate position and to make a compromise solution possible; on the other hand, India blamed the United States for swinging several delegations from support of the very mild resolution on non-self-governing territories between the vote in the Fourth Committee and in the Assembly.

Taking into account primarily, but not exclusively, the tangible, public record, ACOA approved the American position on two issues (admission of new members; British Togoland); approved with qualifications its position on three issues (French Cameroons—right on final vote; French Togoland—right on final vote and on vote in Trusteeship Council, wrong on support of French position in Fourth Committee until final vote; Algeria—right on final vote, wrong on earlier position); disapproved its position on three issues (information from non-self-governing territories; Tanganyika; self-government for trust territories); and found it unconstructive, if not harmful, on four issues (South Africa, apartheid, and treatment of persons of Indian descent; South West Africa; and the Ethiopian-Somalia boundary problem).

ACOA considers this a less than distinguished record for a leader of the "Free World" and a self-professed opponent of colonialism.

Note: This is the sixth AFRICA-U.N. BULLETIN issued as a service without charge.

Since the Eleventh Session of the United Nations General Assembly adjourned March 8, the BULLETIN will appear less frequently for the next few months, but will, however, continue to report on events taking place in the Trusteeship Council and other U.N. agencies.

Those receiving this BULLETIN can assist the ACOA in disseminating information on Africa-U.N. events in two ways: by submitting names of people interested in receiving the BULLETIN, and by making a contribution toward meeting the costs involved in its publication, if this has not already been done.

Enclosed is \$_____ to be used to help cover costs in publishing the BULLETIN.

Others who might be interested in receiving the BULLETIN are:

Name

Address
