

# AFRICA-U.N. BULLETIN

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## PROSPECTS FOR THE NEW SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The thirteenth session of the UN General Assembly opened on Tuesday, September 16th, and the Secretary General has proposed December 12th as the closing date. In the intervening three months the Assembly is scheduled to consider the following issues of particular interest to Africa:

1. South West Africa: For the first time since the issue of South West Africa was brought before the UN the Union government this year allowed official representatives of the UN into South African territory to discuss the problem. As reported in Bulletin No. 9 of November 15, 1957, the last Assembly created a Good Offices Committee consisting of one representative each of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Brazil to "discuss with the Government of the Union . . . a basis for an agreement which would continue to accord to the Territory of South West Africa an international status. . ." The report of the Good Offices Committee, dated August 27, 1958, set forth for consideration by the Assembly two suggestions to which the Union had indicated agreement:

a. The Union would enter into an agreement specifying the "international character" of the Territory, acknowledging that it could not be altered unilaterally, and promising to abide, with certain specified exceptions, by the provisions of articles 2-5 of the old mandate agreement, which enumerate the obligations of the mandatory power, and to furnish certain information about the Territory; the Union would not accept the UN as the other party to the agreement, but would accept the United Kingdom, the United States, and France as the three remaining Principal Allied and Associated Powers (of the first World War -- the Territory, a former German territory, was disposed of by the victorious allies under the League of Nations mandate system).

b. The Territory would be split into a southern sector which would be legally incorporated into the Union and a northern sector which the Union would administer as an integral part of its territory under a trusteeship agreement with the UN. The Union was sufficiently interested in the latter proposal to offer to investigate whether such partition would be practicable.

It is considered unlikely that either of these proposals will win Assembly approval, although there may be some interest in the second as a face-saving device. The partition proposed in principle would in effect annex permanently to the Union the only fertile farming sections and rich mineral areas, where all the whites in the Territory now live, and leave the barren desert to the Africans, who would have to choose between racial extinction there (a fate which it is anticipated the Bushmen will suffer there within a couple of generations) or becoming a part of South Africa's unhappy migratory farm or industrial labor force. A proposal to place the northern section under direct UN administration might find a number of advocates despite its obvious disadvantages, as such a trust area would represent a beacon of light and hope to the Africans in the neighboring Union and Angola. But the proposal reported by the Committee would sacrifice the substance of the principle of trusteeship by allowing the Union to annex outright the desirable portions of the Territory for the

mere name of trusteeship to an unviable area. The Union's grudging acceptance of trusteeship, as a "compromise" and not as a matter of "right," Union negotiators reiterated, does not warrant, in the opinion of ACOA, acceptance of the Committee's second proposal.

2. The Algerian question: The exact form that the "Algerian question" will take is still uncertain. The constitutional crisis in France (which, regardless of its outcome, necessitates some change in French plans for Algeria) and the establishment of an independent provisional Algerian government-in-exile by the F.L.N. make the last Assembly resolution, urging (indefinite) pourparlers, worthless even as a point of departure for this year's consideration of the problem. The new Gaullist government has, however, reasserted France's position of previous years, that France's relations with Algeria are matters of internal concern outside the competence of the UN, and France has again threatened not to attend any meetings at which the issue is discussed. The French were not, however, able to carry out this same boycott threat last year (they sent their most able representatives to argue the question and were absent only from the vote on the question), and it seems unlikely that they will be able to refrain from debating the subject again this time.

3. Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories: A real struggle is shaping up between the colonial and anti-colonial powers on this subject. The anti-colonial countries will try to reverse the defeat they suffered last year in an indirect attempt to compel Portugal to report on Angola, Mozambique, and Portuguese Guinea in Africa (See Bulletin No. 10, January 16, 1958). ACOA hopes to be able to present hitherto unavailable documentary material to UN delegates on the basis of which a real challenge may be made to the Portuguese assertion that its overseas territories are legally "provinces" in all ways equivalent to the provinces of metropolitan Portugal.

At the same time it is understood that the European colonial powers -- with or without American connivance -- will attempt to completely emasculate the UN's feeble powers in relation to non-self-governing territories by terminating the existence of the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories, whose existence will automatically end this year unless it is renewed. ACOA urges the reestablishment of the Committee, preferably with increased powers, for an indefinite period until all colonial territories obtain independence or real self-government.

4. Apartheid in South Africa: a. As affecting the people of Indian origin in the Union, and b. As creating racial conflict between the White and Non-White people of the Union.

These two facets of the same basic problem have been before the UN ever since its earliest days. Numerous resolutions entreating, suggesting, or urging negotiations with the governments of India and Pakistan as to the treatment of their nationals and their descendants have not moved the Nationalist government any more than the pious resolutions as to race conflict generally; as a consequence of even such weak "interference" in its "internal" affairs, Union delegates have boycotted most of the last two Assembly meetings.

Two years ago the General Assembly failed to renew the existence of its Special Commission on the Racial Situation in South Africa, which had been established three years previously to collect information about apartheid in South Africa. Rather than attempt to revive this Commission, which appears an impossible task, some delegates have suggested the establishment of a new UN commission on the racial situation in Africa generally: such a proposal might help to bring light to bear on

serious racial problems in other parts of the Continent which have been ignored or hidden due to the furor over apartheid, and might encourage the South Africans again to participate in the UN since it would no longer be singled out in debate for its racial policies.

5. The future of French Togoland: As reported in the Bulletin of January 16, 1958, the last session of the General Assembly refused to approve the French request for termination of its Togoland trusteeship until general elections (the first since the introduction of universal suffrage under the 1956 loi-cadre and the special Togoland statute establishing the "Autonomous Togo Republic" within the French Union) should be held under UN supervision; in an unanticipated upset this past April candidates opposed to the end of trusteeship at this time won two-thirds of the seats in the Legislature, and their leader, Sylvanus Olympio, a regular petitioner before the UN, was named premier. The French have not indicated what, if any, proposals they will make for Togoland, but it is quite obvious that UN delegates will turn to Olympio and his lieutenants for interpretation of the wishes of the Territory's inhabitants. The French appear to be resigned to the possibility that the new Togo government will eventually announce its intention to confederate with Ghana (which incorporates the former British Togo Trust Territory) thus finally reuniting the Ewe tribesmen of that area under one government; but they may react quite differently if neighboring Dahomey, a French colony, is asked to leave the French Union and also to join with Ghana in a regional confederation.

6. Report of the Trusteeship Council and election of new members: Unfortunately there probably will not be any special report on the British and French Cameroons ready in time for this session of the General Assembly as the Council's visiting mission will not leave for West Africa until late in the fall. As a result, there may not be any extended examination of French and Cameroonian compliance with the makeshift resolution passed by the last General Assembly nor any investigation of the suppression of local groups by French troops without notice to the UN.

Other issues include:

7. Draft international covenants on human rights.

8. Recommendations regarding international respect for the rights of peoples and nations to self-determination.

9. Report on the Economic Commission for Africa.

10. Assistance to Libya.

11. Question of the disputed frontier beyond the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration and Ethiopia. The background of this question and the action of the last session of the Assembly are set forth in previous Bulletins Nos. 8 and 10.