

OBSERVATIONS ON THE EIGHTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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The Eighteenth Session of the General Assembly which adjourned on December 18th did not take spectacular action on African issues. It had been thought by many when the Assembly opened in September that the African States would demand much more vigorous action on South Africa, for example, than actually finally emerged. It might be useful to make some observations on what the accomplishments and actions of the Assembly were, the mood of the Assembly which was largely determinative in what came out of it, and the position of the United States on the African issues.

I. Actions Taken by the Assembly and an Assessment of the Accomplishments

A. With the admission of Kenya and Zanzibar into membership, African States now number 34 (excluding South Africa) out of 113 Member States in the United Nations. The joint Afro-Asian vote now totals 58, which is more than half the total membership. This has obvious implications as far as action on colonial issues is concerned. Seven of the sixteen vice-presidencies of the Assembly and three of the chairmanships of the seven Assembly committees will be reserved for Africa and Asia.

B. The Africans and Asians obtained approval of the Assembly for two resolutions to increase the number of members on the Security Council by four and the Economic and Social Council by nine. However, in order for these actions to become binding, they must be approved by the five permanent members of the Security Council. Africans on the whole take a pessimistic view of this being accomplished soon. Both France and the Soviet Union voted against the resolutions. The United States and the United Kingdom abstained. Only China voted favorably. It is probable that some compromise resolution will be proposed later this year, but it cannot be expected that resolutions about increasing the size of the Councils will be easily passed by the Security Council.

C. South Africa

1. The African countries did not press action to expel or suspend South Africa from the United Nations as had been expected before the General Assembly convened.

2. It is significant that for the first time, with the exception of South Africa itself and Portugal, resolutions on South Africa were passed virtually unanimously and with the agreement of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

3. The most important clauses in the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and by the General Assembly were:

- a. calling upon all Member States to cease forthwith the sale and shipment of equipment and materials for the

manufacture and maintenance of arms and ammunition in South Africa (Security Council);

- b. establishing a small group of recognized experts to examine methods of resolving the present situation in South Africa through peaceful and orderly application of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to consider what part the UN might play in achieving this end (Security Council);
- c. requesting the South African Government to abandon the "sabotage trial" which opened in late October, and to release political prisoners charged in one way or another with opposing the policy of apartheid;
- d. requesting the Secretary General and Member States to seek ways and means of providing relief to the families of persons persecuted by the South African Government for their opposition to apartheid.

Most African delegations seemed to feel that the resolution passed by the General Assembly at about the time the "sabotage trial" was to begin in South Africa ("c" above) was the strongest action taken on the South African issue. The resolution calling on Member States to cease sending equipment and materials that could be used to manufacture arms is an extension of the resolution passed in the Security Council during the summer, which called upon them not to send arms to South Africa. Many African States were skeptical about the value of the resolution establishing a group of experts. It was looked upon as an effort in part to undermine the work of the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, established by last year's General Assembly. The work of this Special Committee will be continued and additional reports will be put out by it. A principal question about the group of experts is whether the South African Government will permit such a group, composed of non-UN personnel, to go into South Africa to get information for its report.

D. Portuguese Territories

Nothing new emerged from the resolutions either of the General Assembly or the Security Council on the issue of Portuguese Territories during this session. The Assembly resolution requested the Security Council to consider the question and then reiterated the operative portion of the Security Council resolution of July 31st. The special summer meeting of the Council asked for the recognition of the right of the people of the Portuguese Territories to independence and self-determination, the cessation of repressive acts, for a political amnesty, and for negotiations with the political leaders of the nationalist groups.

The most significant development on the Portuguese Territories was the discussions held by the Foreign Ministers of various African States with the Foreign Minister of Portugal while the Assembly was in session. Most of the African delegations take the view that these discussions were a waste of time, and that they succeeded in placing the Secretary General in an awkward position. Judging from the report issued by the Secretary General, the crux of the discussions involved an interpretation of what "self-determination" really means. It was obvious that the African States and the Portuguese had quite different views on this. The

Portuguese Foreign Minister made quite clear that Portugal did not envisage self-determination as meaning a separation of African territories from Portugal itself. On the other hand, the African States understand self-determination as leading to or at least implying the right to choose independence. Many African delegates privately blame Mr. Godfrey Amahree for putting the Secretary General in a position where he seems to be giving ground to the Portuguese position. The Secretary General has been invited by Portugal to visit its African territories. His decision has not yet been made known. Most Africans seem to think it would be a very bad mistake for him to take this trip.

E. South West Africa

The issue of South West Africa will not be carried very much further in the General Assembly until the International Court of Justice renders its decision in the case now pending before it. Nevertheless, resolutions on South West were passed by the Assembly. They included operative paragraphs urging Member States not to supply oil to South Africa because of the policies she is following in South West; and requested the Committee on Colonialism to examine "the implications of the activities of the mining industry and of other international companies having interests in South West Africa in order to assess their economic and political influence and their mode of operation"; and condemned South Africa for its refusal to cooperate with the United Nations in the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

F. Southern Rhodesia

The Southern Rhodesian item was not critical in the discussions of the Assembly this year. This is partly due to the fact that the Central African Federation was due to break up by the end of 1963 and it was expected that this plus the independence of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia would speed up developments in Southern Rhodesia. Another factor was the split in the nationalist ranks between Nkomo and Sithole. The resolution passed by the General Assembly calls upon Great Britain not to transfer military and political power to the white minority now in control in Southern Rhodesia, and also not to grant independence to Southern Rhodesia until the territory has established majority rule based on universal adult suffrage.

II. The Mood of the Assembly and the US Position

The dominating mood of the Assembly was the spirit of understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union, growing out of the agreement on a limited test ban treaty. Again and again in talking with various African representatives and asking why there was not more vigorous action taken on some of the African issues, the reply came back in rather confidential tones: "Well, you know I am very much in favor of the spirit of detente, but this makes it difficult to press hard on colonial issues. The African States do not have so much bargaining power when there is an understanding between the big powers." This statement seems to be the essential fact to bear in mind as one attempts to assess the Eighteenth General Assembly. The United States and the Soviet Union were not vying with one another in extreme ways to win the support or the favor of the African States. The Soviet Union was not trying so hard to put the United States in an embarrassing position. A spirit of accommodation was an undercurrent in most of the discussions. The African States appreciated this fact and themselves tried to take no positions to try to bring the cold war into the forefront again. Thus the United States felt it could adhere to a generally go-slow policy.

Early in the session it was thought the United States would be placed in a very unfortunate position by the stands it was expected the African States would take. Actually, the United States probably came out better in the eyes of the Africans than the Soviet Union, due primarily to the fact that the Soviet Union voted against increasing the size of the Councils, whereas the United States abstained on the question.

The US voting record was a mixed one: abstentions on the two resolutions regarding Southern Rhodesia; a vote against the resolution on South West Africa involving oil sanctions; a vote for the resolution on South West Africa asking the Security Council to consider the question; an abstention on the resolution on Portuguese Territories passed by the General Assembly, but a vote for the Security Council resolution urging increased pressure on Portugal to promote self-determination in the Portuguese Territories in Africa; a vote for the resolutions in both the Assembly and the Security Council on South Africa. There was a last-minute change of position apparently in voting for the resolution in the General Assembly on the political trials in South Africa. On the whole, the United States favored the "weaker" resolutions, setting up the group of experts to study the South African situation, for example, and strongly favoring continuation of the discussions between the Portuguese Foreign Minister and the African representatives. There was still a decided lack of a positive initiative on the part of the United States Government in dealing with any of the African issues. The US did make clear in a speech on South West Africa that she was prepared to abide by Article 94 of the Charter following the decision of the International Court. This article allows a party to the dispute to appeal to the Security Council to decide upon measures to implement the judgement rendered.

Two issues which were potentially very embarrassing to the US were finally smoothed over. One revolved around the visit of Captain Henrique Galvao to the UN as a petitioner on the Portuguese Territories. The Fourth Committee debated at length whether to approve his appearance, issue being the extradition treaty between the United States and Portugal which might lead to Galvao's arrest once he set foot in this country. There was a question whether the Headquarters Agreement would be violated if Galvao was arrested on his way to or from the UN. If he remained in the country, he would not be covered by the Agreement, which guarantees travel to the United Nations for five categories of persons, including "invitees." Despite several days of debate, the legal conflict was not resolved, but Galvao did make his presentation and was not arrested.

The other issue was the publicity given in the testimony of Eduardo Mondlane to the Fourth Committee on an arrangement between the US and South Africa for some sort of nuclear experimentation in an abandoned gold mine near Johannesburg. The Washington Post had carried an article reporting that the experimentation would amount to an investment of hundreds of millions of dollars. Further clarification revealed that the sum involved was hundreds of thousands of dollars. Also, it was clarified that the experiment did not involve explosive materials and had nothing to do with bombs. Nevertheless, given the mood of the African delegates at the Assembly on the South African issue, it was a decided embarrassment to the US to have even a limited agreement (although it seemingly involves Case Institute in Cleveland and Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg) aired so thoroughly in the UN.