

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 761st
MEETING**



Friday, 29 October 1971
at 10.45 a.m.

NEW YORK

Chairman: Mr. Cornelius C. CREMIN (Ireland).

AGENDA ITEMS 37 AND 12

The policies of *apartheid* of the Government of South Africa (*continued*) (A/8403, A/8422 and Corr.1, A/8467, A/8468, A/SPC/145):

- (a) Report of the Special Committee on *Apartheid* (A/8422 and Corr.1);
- (b) Reports of the Secretary-General (A/8467, A/8468);
- (c) Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapter XVII (section C)) (A/8403)

1. Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) said that the Iranian Government's oft-enunciated stand on the question of *apartheid* was well known to the Committee. By virtue of its culture and its traditions, Iran was opposed to racial discrimination and segregation of any kind. Its 25 centuries of history bore witness to its spirit of tolerance and its regard for justice and human dignity. In his delegation's view, the current status of the question gave cause for concern and discouragement. In vain had the United Nations proclaimed 1971 as the International Year for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, in vain had the United Nations specialized agencies together with private bodies and non-governmental institutions striven to explain the facts of *apartheid* and mobilize public opinion: there was no gainsaying the fact that the South African Government's practices were as rigorous as they had been.

2. Thanks to new laws promulgated during the past year, it had succeeded in arresting and detaining more and more people. The clergy had been subjected to pressure for having tried to challenge *apartheid*. The number of political prisoners arrested under the Terrorism Act of 1967 had increased. As recorded in the report of the Special Committee on *Apartheid* (A/8422 and Corr.1), the deportation of Africans had continued. Under the Group Areas Act, thousands of non-white families had had to leave the urban and agricultural areas for camps and reservations where poverty, malnutrition and sickness were alarmingly rampant. Meanwhile, South Africa's economy was becoming more and more dependent on non-white manpower. The African population had increased by 1,200,000 from 1960 to 1970, with 53.3 per cent of it now living in the "white part" of South Africa, where the proportion of whites had fallen from 19.3 per cent in 1960 to 17.8 per cent in 1970.

3. There were two aspects of *apartheid*. On the one hand, there was the human problem, arising from the fact that the most elementary rights were being denied to large numbers of persons subjected to unbearable and outrageous condi-

tions. On the other hand, there was the fact that the existing situation could not continue without endangering the peace and security of the region. Each of those aspects must inevitably be a matter of concern for all mankind, and Member States had the duty of acquainting all peoples with what *apartheid* was and could lead to.

4. However, he believed he could discern certain encouraging signs. The South African Government seemed to be showing a desire to gain the confidence, co-operation and respect of other nations. Opposition, both at home and abroad, together with certain economic difficulties, had forced it to make certain readjustments in its policy. To attempt to remain aloof from the mainstream of the modern world would be tantamount, in fact, to condemning itself to failure. Refusal to respect human rights would bring irreversible consequences in its train. Keeping the victims of underdevelopment isolated from progress was contrary to the development strategy, whereas a policy of integration and co-operation would make the black community hopeful for the future.

5. His delegation would like to go on record to express its appreciation of the action taken on behalf of the victims of *apartheid* by the specialized agencies, and particularly UNESCO, the ILO and ICAO. It congratulated and thanked the Special Committee on *Apartheid* whose recommendations, as set forth in the report, warranted special attention. Lastly, it had pleasure in drawing attention to the fact that Iran was making a substantial contribution to the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa as a token of solidarity, and that it would be making a contribution of about \$5,000 to the Assistance Fund for the Struggle against Colonialism and *Apartheid* of the Organization of African Unity. It was to be hoped that that crucial problem would have assumed a new and more cheerful aspect by the time the General Assembly held its twenty-seventh session.

6. Mr. BOGDAN (Romania) recalled that his Government, faithful to its policy of peace and co-operation among nations, had consistently condemned the South African Government's *apartheid* policies and had worked for their abolition. Romania was solidly behind the peoples fighting for freedom and progress against imperialism, colonialism and racism. *Apartheid* combined the worst aspects of racism and colonialism into an anti-humanitarian policy constituting an ever-growing threat to international co-operation. The fact that the United Nations was born of a war resulting from the racist doctrine of an aggressive Power provided the measure of the duty incumbent upon it to contribute towards the elimination of *apartheid*. The deeper the appreciation of those facts, the greater was the sense of concern and disappointment at the lack of progress towards a solution of the *apartheid* problem. The latter exemplified, incidentally, the growing disparity in the

United Nations between agreement on principles and actual performance. With the Organization now entering on a new phase of its existence and striving for greater effectiveness, a fresh attempt to abolish *apartheid* with all possible speed would be of great importance.

7. For some years, the debates had centred not so much on the fundamental principles at issue as on the methods of implementing them, the implication being, perhaps, that recognition of *apartheid* as being inhuman and as jeopardizing world peace and security was now unanimous. On the other hand, the differences of opinion as to the methods to be used to achieve the set objectives were reaching a point where they were threatening the accepted principles. The dispute stemmed from the fact that some of the influential nations contended that the vigorous measures recommended by the majority of the Member States had proved impractical and ineffective. The truth was, however, that those measures had never been applied, for the reason that South Africa's main trading partners and arms suppliers had blocked them; and hence it would be impossible to say whether they were effective or not. They were perhaps impractical from the standpoint of the interests of certain Governments, but that was not to say that they were so from the standpoint of the international community in general. Of course, no measure adopted by the General Assembly could be effective unless it were applied by the States having close economic and political ties with South Africa—in other words, those same States which continued to block every concerted international effort to liquidate *apartheid*. It was important to emphasize the responsibility of those States.

8. If history and experience were any guide, the abolition of *apartheid* was inevitable. Nothing could prevent the indigenous peoples of South Africa from achieving victory in their struggle for freedom and national dignity. But if that process was to be carried out peacefully, without painful complications for the international community and the parties involved, there had to be an improvement, rather than a worsening, of the situation, through a concerted and immediate international effort. However, violence was increasing in South Africa, and the international community, through its passivity, was encouraging it still further.

9. If Member States wished to make United Nations action on *apartheid* more effective, they must match their behaviour to the principles they professed. It was in that spirit that his delegation reaffirmed its support for the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and expressed its readiness to back any measure, consistent with the Charter, designed to bring *apartheid* to an end.

10. Mr. HOMEM DE MELLO (Portugal), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that at the preceding meeting the representative of Saudi Arabia had had the courage to express various truths about Portugal which the majority of the United Nations Members were not always pleased to hear, and which had caused an outburst of anger on the part of the Nigerian representative. Without wishing to stray from the subject of the present debate, he would like to warn the Committee against the latter's fantasies.

11. Portugal had never approved, or practised, racial discrimination; its entire history testified to a multiracial

life-style unique in the world. Hence to say that the blacks, in the Portuguese provinces in Africa, were debarred from entering cinemas on a par with the whites was absolutely false, and to talk of "*assimilados*", although that population category had ceased to exist for 10 years or more, was to exploit the dead past for purposes of political speculation. The "*assimilados*", in any case, had not been outlawed but merely placed under the protection of the law pending their attainment of a minimum level of civilization. It was monstrous to talk of the "*bairros indígenas*" as if they were a kind of black ghetto, whereas it could easily be verified that blacks, whites and people of mixed origin lived side by side there as fellow humans. It was true that the standard of living in those districts was far from adequate, but Portugal was trying to raise it. The same applied, surely, to the whole of Africa and to Nigeria first and foremost.

12. Whereas the Nigerian representative had alleged that Portugal had never allowed the blacks in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea the slightest possibility of participation, the fact was that a member of the Portuguese delegation, Mr. Pinheiro da Silva, had been Secretary of Education in the province of Angola. Another example was that of his family doctor, who came from Mozambique and was even darker-skinned, perhaps, than the Nigerian representative, and who declared himself proud of his status and felt himself completely Portuguese.

13. In making those additional points, he had spoken not out of respect for the spokesman of Governments which attacked his country and were always ready to encourage and assist subversion in the Portuguese territories, but simply out of consideration for the Committee.

14. Mr. EDREMODA (Nigeria), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that truth should be based on objective and provable facts. The true situation in Portuguese colonies was as described in the United Nations reports and the testimonies of humanitarian, religious and other organizations which had been able to go to the colonies, and not as reported to the Committee by the representative of Portugal.

15. It was interesting to note that the representative of Portugal had not referred to forced labour or to the thousands of Africans sent to South African mines. Was that not discrimination? He did not intend to insult Portugal, but the truth was bound to be unpleasant to a country which practised racial discrimination. He agreed with the Portuguese representative that his country's policy was unique: Portugal was one of the poorest countries in Europe with an illiteracy rate of 80 per cent, yet it exploited its colonies in the worst conditions imaginable. Furthermore, its policy was unique, since it strove to assimilate Africans with Europeans, even against their will. The Africans did not wish to be assimilated, but respected for their colour, their way of life and their beliefs. The policy of assimilation with the whites was the best proof of racial discrimination. Furthermore, unlike the Africans, poor Portuguese were not called "*assimilados*".

16. With regard to subversion, as long as the colonial régime continued to exist, the population of the territories under Portuguese domination would struggle for their liberty and dignity and would receive the support of all

freedom-loving and independence-loving countries. Portugal should therefore grant independence to its colonies and allow them to occupy their proper place in the international community.

17. Mr. TEKLE (Ethiopia) said that it was distressing that at a time when mankind's knowledge had extended beyond the limits of the earth the efforts made by the United Nations during the past 25 years had yielded no results and the international community had not devised machinery for terminating the chronic disease of *apartheid*. His delegation was aware of the magnitude of the problem, but it was convinced that if the great Powers had shown their goodwill and responded to the repeated appeals of the United Nations instead of continuing to trade with South Africa and providing it with financial, moral, political and military support, the problem would have been solved long ago. As noted in the report of the Special Committee, the military build-up of South Africa, with the co-operation of the imperialist régimes, was aimed against the peoples and Governments of southern Africa and constituted a threat to international peace and security. A case in hand was the recent Zambian complaint to the Security Council.

18. In spite of the fact that, in accordance with the Charter, Members of the United Nations were obliged to accept and carry out all decisions of the Security Council, South Africa's trading partners, putting their economic interests before principles continued to violate the arms embargo. As a result, the South African régime, defying the resolutions of the United Nations and world public opinion, did not hesitate to apply new and ever-harsher measures to strengthen its policy and repress those opposing it. The propaganda about "separate development" and the "dialogue" was intended merely to deceive world public opinion and undermine the world campaign against *apartheid*: the Bantustan scheme was actually designed to deprive the African people of its rights forever.

19. While in South Africa the reign of terror continued, the legitimate aspirations of the victims of *apartheid* were receiving wider and wider support in the world. In addition to the direct interest of the Organization of African Unity in the problem, conferences and seminars were being organized on the subject and students, churches and many newspapers were showing their concern; the specialized agencies of the United Nations had brought to the world the true image of *apartheid* through their publications; the international sports community had banned South African teams from all major sports events. The policy of *apartheid* and its brutalities could only shock the conscience of all those who believed in the equality of man.

20. The people directly concerned had come to the inevitable conclusion that only armed struggle could redeem their lost freedom. Africa and the whole world were behind them in their struggle, for their cause was just and would triumph in the end.

21. He did, however, hope that the United Nations would, before it was too late, take effective measures to promote its own noble purposes and settle a problem which might undermine its very foundation. The Special Committee on *Apartheid* was performing extremely valuable work and should continue to do so since that was the only way in

which the international community could keep under review a situation that was being perpetuated in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the public opinion of all countries could be made aware of the serious implications of the situation.

22. Mr. HOMEM DE MELLO (Portugal), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, objected to the word "racist" which the representative of Nigeria had used. The Government of Portugal was prepared to start a dialogue with African countries and was ready to accept criticism of its policy, but it was offended when it was accused of racism.

23. Mr. PAMBOU (People's Republic of the Congo), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Portugal had claimed that the situation in the Portuguese African colonies was of no concern to the Committee; he had even warned against allusions to the policy of his country. Members of the Committee were not bound to accept his warning. The debate might end in an impasse if members had to listen impassively to counter-truths which were unacceptable to all Africans and, more generally, to all human beings worthy of the name who had some knowledge, however small, of the real situation in the Portuguese African colonies.

24. His delegation wished to state that it reserved the right, in connexion with the question of *apartheid*, to refer to all examples which it considered pertinent, and particularly to Portugal. The representative of that country was once again endeavouring to mislead the Committee with claims that there was no trace of *apartheid* in the Territories under its administration. The Congo, which bordered on those Territories, did not lack specific evidence to the contrary. And even if, as Portugal claimed, it did not practice racial discrimination, it was none the less true that it supported South Africa and its racial policy. He therefore endorsed the statement made by the representative of Nigeria.

25. Mr. EDREMODA (Nigeria) stressed that a prerequisite for any dialogue between African States and Portugal was that the latter should first confer directly with the authorized representatives of the peoples under its domination, as the other colonial Powers had done before it. That would change Portugal's position with the African States and the international community as a whole, while as long as it persisted in its present policy, no African State would enter into a dialogue with it.

26. Mr. TEYMOUR (Egypt) endorsed the remarks of the representative of Nigeria. If the Portuguese representative's offer of a dialogue was merely a manoeuvre to gain sympathy for his country, he should know that the Committee was not a forum for propaganda statements. On the other hand, he might be sincere and intend to enter into a dialogue with the representatives of the liberation movements with a view to granting independence to the colonies in accordance with United Nations resolutions. He should explain exactly what he meant by dialogue.

27. Mr. HOMEM DE MELLO (Portugal) was prepared to provide the clarification requested by the representative of Egypt. By dialogue, he meant the possibility of discussing

Portugal's African policy, but only within the framework of the United Nations and with countries which did not consider Portugal a racist country, an allegation which, he repeated, was absolutely false.

28. Mr. TEYMOUR (Egypt) was pleased that the Committee now had a clear idea of Portugal's interpretation of the word "dialogue", that interpretation was not in conformity with the draft resolutions adopted by the Committee, with the Charter of the United Nations, or with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

29. Mr. DIOP (Guinea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, objected to the false insinuations of the representative of Portugal who wanted to use his country as an example of peaceful co-operation, quibbled with the word "racist", and pretended to be prepared for a dialogue. Portugal was today a cancer of the progressive world. Guinea, by its geography, was one of the best placed countries to throw light on the scandalous policy rampant in the territories under Portuguese domination, and his delegation reserved the right to do so.

30. Mr. AHMAD (India), speaking on a point of order, informed members of the Committee of a development which, he was sure, could not fail to move them. It was the so-called suicide of Mr. Ahmed Timol, a teacher of Indian origin imprisoned in Johannesburg which had been reported that very day in *The New York Times*. He had not been the only prisoner to die in detention as a result of torture. At least 17 cases were known and the Special Committee on *Apartheid* had provided all available information on those

deaths which could not be treated as routine brutalities of *apartheid*. In 1963 there had been the death of Mr. Looksmart Solwandle Ngudle, a leader of the African National Congress, in 1964 that of Mr. Suliman Salloojee, a leader of the Indian community and in 1969, that of the Imam Abdullah Haron. In the case of the latter no official explanation of his death had yet been provided. In protest against the obscure circumstances of that death, the Reverend Bernard Wrankmore had gone on a hunger strike which he intended to continue until the matter was cleared up.

31. The United Nations could not merely look on such flagrant violations of human rights, which the General Assembly should declare to be crimes against humanity. He suggested that the Committee should pay a tribute to the Reverend Wrankmore who had not hesitated to risk his own life to struggle against *apartheid*.

32. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would take the Indian representative's suggestion into consideration.

Organization of the Committee's work

33. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the list of speakers wishing to participate in the general debate on the question of *apartheid* would be closed on 1 November at 6 p.m. and invited members of the Committee to attend a showing of four films on *apartheid* at 3 p.m. that afternoon.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.