

United Nations
**GENERAL
 ASSEMBLY**

FOURTEENTH SESSION
 Official Records

**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 146th
 MEETING**

Friday, 6 November 1959,
 at 3.15 p.m.



NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
Agenda item 61:	
Question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of "apartheid" of the Government of the Union of South Africa (continued)	93

Chairman: Mr. Charles T. O. KING (Liberia).

AGENDA ITEM 61

Question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of "apartheid" of the Government of the Union of South Africa (A/4147 and Add.1, A/SPC/L.37) (continued)

1. Mr. GRYAZNOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the Union of South Africa's policy of racial discrimination was based primarily on economic factors and that its racialist legislation was designed solely to provide juridical safeguards for the interests of the whites. Consequently, special emphasis should be placed on the social and economic aspects of the question. Eighty-seven per cent of the land belonged to the white minority, and the non-whites, who comprised 80 per cent of the population, were not even entitled to be in charge of industrial, commercial or other enterprises. Their fate was to work for the whites in the most iniquitous conditions. Their wages were four or five times lower than those of the whites; they were not protected by labour laws; and they were prohibited from organizing trade unions. They could not move from one place to another without permits, and violators were punished by forced labour performed mainly on farms owned by whites, where working conditions, as pointed out in the *New Statesman* of 28 February 1959, were almost mediaeval. According to official statistics, the mortality rate for non-whites was six times higher than for whites, and their life expectancy was more than twenty years shorter than that of whites. In addition, the non-white population was denied the most elementary political rights and freedoms.

2. It was natural in the circumstances for all men of good will, regardless of their ideological or religious beliefs, to protest against the Union of South Africa's racial policy. In so doing, the Archbishop of Cape Town, for example, had said on 25 September 1959 that the peaceful future of Africa would be seriously threatened so long as there was racial discrimination.

3. Nevertheless, although world public opinion had denounced the policy of "apartheid", the Union Government was continuing to increase and strengthen its discriminatory practices. Its attitude was redolent of colonialism in that it was seeking the additional profits to be derived from merciless exploitation, and it was no accident that the policy of "apartheid" prevailed in a region where the various forms of colonialism had not yet been stamped out. That explained why South

Africa was especially attractive to foreign capital, a fact reflected in the optimistic statement made by Mr. David Rockefeller at Johannesburg in February 1959.

4. The practice of racial discrimination, which the Union Government did not even attempt to deny, was a challenge to mankind because it established the rule of the arbitrary and connoted the humiliation of the human person; it was a monstrous anomaly in an era of great social achievements and of the collapse of colonialism before the onslaught of national liberation movements. The Byelorussian people, whose full sympathy went out to oppressed peoples, was confident that the time was near when all the African peoples would be completely liberated. His delegation would support any step to put an end to the system of racial discrimination in the Union of South Africa.

5. Mr. PEYREFITTE (France) emphasized the importance of the peaceful coexistence of races. He recalled the age-old traditions of France respecting racial equality. The practice of racial segregation, as described in Alan Paton's book *Cry, the Beloved Country*,^{1/} evoked pity, censure and anxiety in France. France had been guided in those matters, both in the metropolitan country and in its former colonies, by considerations diametrically opposed to those which appeared to motivate the Union of South Africa. The evolution of its overseas territories had culminated in the creation of the French Community. The nature of that association should be fully understood: it translated into reality the threefold motto of the French Republic: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; and foreshadowed the world community which it was to be hoped would one day be created among all peoples, irrespective of their religion or the colour of their skin.

6. In connexion with racial conflicts in South Africa, some representatives had expressed their disapproval of the so-called "colonial" Powers among which they appeared to include France. But anti-colonialism should not be confused with "decolonization". The latter term was used to designate the process whereby former colonial peoples acceded to self-government—a normal, desirable and inevitable evolutionary process which it must be hoped would take place smoothly. Anti-colonialism, on the other hand, was a myth discrediting all former colonial Powers lumped together and disparaging their action regardless of the material, health, social or cultural advantages it might have brought to the colonial peoples. The myth had a definite ideological origin and—not unnaturally—found a receptive audience among coloured peoples. It would not be very wise, however, to fall into that trap laid by a certain type of propaganda. The result would be to foster and increase racial tensions instead of eliminating them.

^{1/} Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948).

7. As had been suggested by the representatives of the Philippines (140th meeting) and India (144th meeting), proclamations of anti-racialism should not be allowed to serve as an alibi for an inverted racialism. Some speakers seemed to be looking beyond the white population of South Africa and putting the white race as a whole in the dock. The bias shown by some delegations was understandable and even excusable, but it would be realistic to try to overcome those frustration complexes. There was no denying that the colonizing nations had committed abuses, but if "decolonization" was the inevitable and felicitous ebb-tide of history, time would doubtless reveal all the benefits of colonization.

8. In the past, colonization had been the great vehicle of civilization. It was by being colonized at one time or another that most nations—including France—had been able to make up for hundreds or thousands of years of delay in the achievement of civilization; no country could, however, claim to have achieved a full measure of civilization, but that was a goal towards which all should strive together. The greatest "decolonizers" were those who most resembled the greatest colonizers. The illustrious pioneer of the "decolonization" movement, Mahatma Gandhi, had a close intellectual kinship with men like Charles de Foucauld, Savorgnan de Brazza and Albert Schweitzer, who had all been inspired by the same ideal of human dignity.

9. France had too much respect for the individual to support the theory—totalitarian in nature—that interference in the internal affairs of a State was permissible. In the Franco-African community, France was careful not to interfere in the internal disputes of member countries; it refrained even from acting as arbiter when so requested. *A fortiori* it did not assume the right to set itself up as a judge and condemn the internal policy of a foreign Government. During the debate on the question of Tibet in the General Assembly (831st to 834th plenary meetings), the representatives of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, the Ukrainian SSR, Romania, the Byelorussian SSR, Albania and Bulgaria had said that the inclusion of the item concerning Tibet in the agenda was without question a blatant attempt at intervention in the domestic affairs of a State and constituted a violation of one of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter. But if that argument was valid for Tibet, it should surely be even more applicable to the Union of South Africa when Tibet, according to those same representatives, could be treated on the same footing as a colony of China whereas the question of "apartheid" concerned only the Government of South Africa acting strictly within its own territory. Interracial matters were so delicate that they should be approached with the utmost caution, as had been pointed out, quite rightly, by the representatives of the United States (141st meeting), and New Zealand and Austria (142nd meeting). An attitude of understanding and trust would undoubtedly prove more effective than an ill-timed attempt to intervene. Ethnic groups which had long lived side by side must themselves learn to adjust their relationships. Outside intervention would only result in making those relations worse.

10. The draft resolution before the Committee (A/SPC/L.37) contained passages condemning the policy of racial segregation in general wherever it was to be found; it also contained passages expressing a

judgement on the domestic policy of the Union of South Africa. In the interests of logic, the French delegation would request a separate vote on each paragraph so that it could vote in favour of the former passages and against the latter. In so doing, it would be abiding by the limitations placed by the authors of the Charter on the scope of the United Nations activities and demonstrating its appreciation of the internal difficulties faced by individual Governments.

11. Mr. Taieb SLIM (Tunisia) said that the fact that the General Assembly had been considering the question of race conflict in South Africa at each session for seven years showed the importance which the United Nations attached to the question. Yet the Union of South Africa continued to disregard all the resolutions adopted by the Assembly on the subject, and its Government not only persisted in its policy but was actually intensifying it. During the current year the Union Government had passed a law—the Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act—reserving certain areas for the Bantu peoples, thus going beyond individual segregation to the segregation of whole communities.

12. The Tunisian Government was concerned over the dangerous consequences which the racial policies of the Union Government might have on the African continent, in view of the growing sense of community among all the African peoples. In that connexion, significance was to be attached to the negative attitude of the Union Government towards the efforts being made both by the independent African States and by the colonial Powers to solve social and economic problems of common interest to the African countries. The absence of a Union delegation from the first session of the Economic Commission for Africa was a case in point.

13. As a step towards overcoming the Union of South Africa's pathological fears of non-white domination in South Africa, the representative of Ceylon had suggested (143rd meeting) reviving the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa, with wider terms of reference which would enable it to study the whole continent of Africa. The Tunisian delegation considered the suggestion sound and recommended it to the Committee for consideration.

14. Tunisia was one of the sponsors of the draft resolution before the Committee which he hoped would be adopted by a very large majority. His delegation would also support any other proposals calculated to put an end to the situation existing in South Africa.

15. Mr. NONG KIMNY (Cambodia) was concerned to note that instead of progressing towards the peaceful solution awaited for the past seven years, the problem of race conflict in South Africa seemed to be deteriorating. In its firm attachment to its tradition of tolerance, the Cambodian Government fervently hoped that the Union of South Africa would reconsider its intransigent attitude and finally agree to revise a policy that was fraught with serious implications for the peace and security of that part of the world. Wisdom counselled that the legitimate aspirations of the non-white population should be recognized before they gathered overwhelming momentum. The Cambodian delegation realized that the Union Government was experiencing considerable difficulties on account of the special structure of its social groupings. But concessions must come from both sides if an acceptable solution was to be found.

16. The absence of its delegation raised doubts as to the sincerity of the Union's wish to assume the obligations incumbent on it under the Charter. He hoped that the Union Government would make a gesture so that mutual discussions within the Committee would be possible.

17. Cambodia was especially anxious to see an equitable settlement because in South Viet-Nam a minority of 500,000 Cambodians was being subjected to a policy of forced assimilation in flagrant contradiction to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Cambodian Government, in accordance with its policy of peace, was seeking a settlement by negotiation.

18. The Cambodian delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Committee.

19. Mr. ALVARADO (Venezuela) said that while everything seemed to have been said on the question of race conflict in South Africa during the many years that the General Assembly had been considering it in all its aspects, the Venezuelan delegation would nevertheless take the opportunity of restating its position during the present discussions. Venezuelan legislation accorded equal protection to all citizens without any distinction. Venezuela thus deplored the policy of racial discrimination practised by the Government of the Union of South Africa, which constituted a violation of the provisions of Article 55 of the Charter and of articles 1, 2 and 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

20. The Venezuelan delegation considered that the United Nations was fully competent to consider the question. It had already pointed out at the thirteenth session (88th meeting) that the provisions of Article 1, paragraph 3, and Articles 13, 55 and 62 of the Charter required all Member States to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Article 2, paragraph 7, could thus not be invoked to cover a violation of those rights and freedoms. His delegation had also pointed out that the evolution of international law and of the concept of national sovereignty made a rigid interpretation of Article 2, paragraph 7, no longer valid. Furthermore, his delegation considered that continued racial discrimination in the Union of South Africa constituted a threat to international peace and that the Union Government's refusal to revise its racial policies could lead to a conflict of incalculable dimensions on the African continent. Moreover, the third paragraph of the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights contained a reference to the need to protect human rights if man was not to be compelled

to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression. If only from that angle, the question thus went beyond the national jurisdiction of the Union of South Africa. The Venezuelan delegation continued to hope, however, that the persistent efforts of the United Nations and the adherence to the principles of the Charter which was to be expected from all Member States would eventually induce the Union Government to modify its racial policy.

21. Venezuela, as one of the sponsors of the draft resolution before the Committee, hoped it would be adopted unanimously, or at least by a greater majority than the resolution approved by the General Assembly at its thirteenth session (resolution 1248 (XIII)).

22. Mr. LIU (China) stated that if account were taken of the question of the treatment of people of Indian origin in the Union of South Africa, which actually arose out of the Union Government's policy of "apartheid", the General Assembly could be said to have been considering the question of racial segregation in South Africa ever since its first session without any progress being made towards a solution. However, during the current session two new trends seemed to have emerged in the discussions. First, there seemed to be less contention concerning the General Assembly's competence to consider the question, since it was generally recognized that matters affecting human rights and fundamental freedoms were an international concern. Furthermore, the present discussion had been marked by a sense of moderation and understanding. At previous sessions the Chinese delegation had stressed the fact that racial prejudices were deeply rooted in certain societies and that the elimination of discriminatory practices required time and patience. The Chinese delegation would be the last to pass hasty judgement on a situation which had been developing in the Union of South Africa for generations. But what was particularly disturbing was that discriminatory practices in South Africa were now sanctioned by law and enforced as a governmental policy. The Chinese delegation considered that such a situation, in whatever country it existed, was fundamentally at variance with the interests of all social groups in the country concerned, and might even affect the fate of all mankind. It could not believe that the Union of South Africa, with its great heritage of political and juridical traditions, could fail to realize the importance of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Chinese delegation maintained the hope that the Union Government would eventually find a solution for the present difficult situation.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.