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**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 235th  
MEETING**

**Wednesday, 29 March 1961,  
at 10.55 a.m.**

**New York**

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**Chairman: Mr. Carlet R. AUGUSTE (Haiti).**

*In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Gamboa (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

**AGENDA ITEM 72**

**Question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of *apartheid* of the Government of the Union of South Africa (A/4419 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2) (*continued*)**

1. Mr. THIAM (Mali) expressed his gratitude to the Powers which had requested inclusion of the question of *apartheid* in the agenda of the fifteenth session. His delegation was at one with those Powers in condemning a racial policy which, in nature and manifestation, was a disgrace to the twentieth century. It asked, of the United Nations, effective steps to compel the Government of the Union of South Africa to cease challenging the Principles and Purposes of the Charter.

2. In the Union of South Africa, eleven million non-whites, who were confined to reservations, despised, imprisoned and sometimes lynched, were challenged in, and even deprived of, their right to life, work and the pursuit of happiness.

3. Certain circles naively alleged that *apartheid* found its justification in the solution of the social and political problem in the Union of South Africa. That specious argument was reminiscent of the one advanced by the champions of the superiority of the Germanic race in Hitler's Germany. Nazism was dead, as all forms of racial imperialism were eventually bound to die.

4. Linked by common ideas and common aims, all men, whatever their race, could live harmoniously together. That basic principle was enshrined in the constitutions of all the independent States of Africa, including the Republic of Mali. Moreover it had been reaffirmed by the participants' in the recent Conference of Independent African States, held at Casablanca in 1961, who had condemned the Union Government's policy of *apartheid*.

5. Unfortunately, appeals by world opinion, and the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council, had had no effect. Indeed, the resolution adopted by the Security Council in April 1960<sup>1</sup> had provoked in the Union of South Africa a wave

<sup>1</sup> Official Records of the Security Council, Fifteenth Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1960, document S/4300.

of brutal repression, which in one place alone had resulted in thirty persons being killed and sixty injured. The Union Government itself had admitted that more than 5,000 Africans arrested on that occasion were still in prison. Martial law continued to be applied.

6. Recent statements by several of those responsible for the inhuman policy of *apartheid* showed that the Government of the Union was firmly resolved not to change its conduct in any respect. It would make no concession, lest such concession should lead to a biological assimilation of races and transform the country into what it contemptuously described as a coloured nation. As its decision to leave the Commonwealth had confirmed, it would not yield either to foreign pressure or, even to threats of war, for its primary concern was to preserve, in Africa, what it called a bastion of the West and of Christianity.

7. Faced with that situation, the United Nations must now decide, once and for all, whether to strengthen its action or whether, regarding the situation there as hopeless, to abandon consideration of the question of race conflict in South Africa. The delegation of Mali, for its part, would lend its support to any draft resolution providing for the sanctions specified in Articles 41 and 42 of the Charter.

8. Mr. SHANAHAN (New Zealand) said that his delegation came to the debate with a sense of anxiety and urgency deepened by recent events. Within the Union of South Africa, in the past few months, some of the tragic consequences of the policy of *apartheid* had, in sharpest focus, been seen. That policy had led to a widening of the gulf between the Union and the other nations of the world. That growing isolation reflected the nature of *apartheid* itself. While there was not one, in the Organization, who could claim to be without blemish where securing the observance of all human rights was concerned, nearly every Member was, he thought, doing its utmost to ensure that peoples of all races enjoyed full equality of rights and opportunities throughout its territories. Unhappily, in the Union of South Africa, the notation of racial superiority was the foundation for the whole structure of government policy and action. Despite links of friendship and common interests which united New Zealand with the Union, that fundamental difference in their philosophies could not fail to be a barrier to understanding. New Zealand was totally opposed to *apartheid* as a policy, not only on moral grounds but also because it was convinced that that policy could not work. The relationship between the peoples of New Zealand was based on completely opposite concepts. All sections of opinion in New Zealand were displaying increasing concern with regard to that matter. When in March 1961 the Union had decided to sever its links with the Commonwealth, Mr. Holyoake, Prime Minister of the New Zealand Government, after stating that the decision was a matter for deep regret, had gone on to say that New Zealand

could not fail to regard *apartheid* with abhorrence. New Zealand had always taken the same firm stand in the General Assembly of the United Nations. It had also supported those resolutions which it had felt to be constructive, while at the same time trying to strike a just balance between the right of States to conduct their own affairs without interference, and the duty of States to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. New Zealand was aware that, in changing circumstances, that balance could change also; the United Nations could not fail to take due cognizance of a situation in which one of its Members was deliberately moving away from the goals set by the Charter.

9. The New Zealand delegation, aware of the mounting anxiety caused by the situation, deplored the lack of any positive response to the appeals which the General Assembly had made. Even so, it did not discount the value of renewing those appeals. There had, in the past, been considerable differences of opinion about the ways and means which the Assembly should adopt, but in recent years there had been a truer and clearer expression of world opinion through the promotion of resolutions which had commanded increasingly wide support.

10. The policies at the Union were creating rifts in its relationships with other countries even outside the inter-governmental sphere. Others had referred to the loss of business confidence felt by the South African economy, and cultural and social ties were also affected. On a different plane South Africa could not escape the effects of the great changes which the last few years had seen in the continent of Africa. Surely, a ship meeting head-on so vigorous a current could not fail to be influenced in its course. The forces in question, and the events which had taken place within the past twelve months, could not fail to affect very greatly the trend of opinion in South Africa.

11. First, the tragic events at Sharpeville and at Langa had led to the adoption, by the Security Council, of a resolution recognizing that the situation in the Union of South Africa was one which had led to international friction and which, if continued, might endanger international peace and security. The fact that the Security Council had found it necessary to call on the Union of South Africa to abandon its policies of racial discrimination could not be lightly dismissed. In addition, the resolution had requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Union Government, to make such arrangements as would adequately help in upholding the Purposes and Principles of the Charter. The Secretary-General had already paid one visit to the Union and had reported that, so far, no mutually acceptable arrangement had been found;<sup>2</sup> he wished, however, to give the matter further consideration. No one doubted that the Secretary-General had done his best. Furthermore, the Government of the Union, having found those talks useful and constructive, had decided to invite him at an appropriate time to visit the Union again in order that the present contact might be continued. A door had thus been left slightly ajar.

12. The second major event of the past year had been the South African Government's decision to withdraw its application for continued membership in the Commonwealth. New Zealand, as indeed every other

member of the Commonwealth, had hoped to be able to persuade the Union Government to make changes, however modest they might seem, which would give some promise that in the long run the policy of *apartheid* would be abandoned. Despite the Union Government's decision, the New Zealand delegation could not help feeling that that decision might lead, more surely than any other single event, to a realization within the Union of the extent to which South Africa had parted company with the world community. As a matter of fact, there were already signs of that in South African press comment. In those circumstances, the New Zealand delegation did not consider that the General Assembly would be showing weakness or indifference by adopting a resolution calling upon the Union Government, once again, to change its policy.

13. U ON SEIN (Burma) said that his delegation was greatly concerned by the lack of any progress towards a solution of the problem of *apartheid*. His country, which believed in the equality of man, was amazed to find that *apartheid* had become the official philosophy and policy of the Union Government. During the last hundred years the white community of South Africa had made a deliberate attempt to induce the Africans of the country to abandon their tribal existence and go to work for that community in urban areas. Similarly, the non-white African had always been welcomed in the gold and diamond mines as a labourer, but never as a prospector, as an owner or even as a skilled worker. The Union Government had officially laid down its policy as one of segregation, especially where residence was concerned. The enjoyment of property and political rights was purely and simply denied to the non-white majority constituting the indigenous population, which had thus been reduced to a humiliating level of inferiority.

14. The Union Government had consistently maintained that the United Nations was intervening in matters which were within its domestic jurisdiction, and that such intervention was contrary to Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter. What that particular passage of the Charter prohibited was intervention in matters which were essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States. Since one of the essential purposes of the United Nations was to encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, the Organization was competent in the matter and should take cognizance of any act or omission contrary to the Principles of the Charter. The Union Government had refused to co-operate, or to take into account the repeated recommendations of the General Assembly. It had even refused to take part in the discussion of the question. Admittedly the General Assembly could not impose its decision on a Member State which refused to co-operate. It must, however, continue to concern itself with the question, which should be included in the agenda of each session of the General Assembly; and in the meantime it should continue to make appeals to the Government of the Union of South Africa.

15. The question of race conflict in South Africa involved the wider problem of relations between white and non-white people throughout the world. The non-whites represented two thirds of the world's population. The search for a solution of the problem must not be abandoned, and his delegation would support any draft resolution directed towards a solution of the question of racial discrimination.

<sup>2</sup> Official Records of the Security Council, Sixteenth Year, Supplement for January, February and March 1961, document S/4635.

16. Mr. SHAHA (Nepal) recalled that racial discrimination was a long-standing and very difficult problem, owing to the fact that such a policy could, unfortunately, mean certain political, social or economic advantages for individuals or groups. In the Union of South Africa, the Government had forced the African population to live in complete isolation. The Africans were not allowed to move as they wished from one area to another; were not granted freedom of worship, or access to education on the same footing as the white population; were denied equal participation in industry, and were subjected to repressive social legislation. Even Africans who had been able to reach a certain level of instruction were denied the right to vote, and consequently their sometimes valuable gifts and experience were wasted. Moreover the indigenous inhabitants had been deprived of fundamental human rights. It was incumbent on all Members of the United Nations to do their utmost to restore to those people their human dignity.

17. The Union Government tried to defend its *apartheid* policy on the ground that it ensured peaceful co-existence between the indigenous and the white inhabitants; but such oppression of the majority by the minority could, in the end, only lead to open rebellion. At a time when so many new States were being created in Africa, and when the African was becoming aware of his rights as an individual, and was increasingly able to command the respect which he deserved, it would not be much longer before his brethren in the Union of South Africa united to demand recognition of their basic worth as human beings. To persist in a policy of *apartheid* could therefore only set up a chain reaction. The inevitable violence which must some day result from such a policy could spread and provoke endless racial disturbances and massacres throughout the world. The fate of the Jews was a striking example: the suppression of their social, economic and religious freedoms had soon degenerated into mass persecutions aimed at their complete extermination. It was not difficult to imagine the repercussions which a rebellion among the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa might have, for instance, in Australia, a "white island" surrounded by a "coloured ocean". Such isolated pockets of white populations might one day be submerged by a wave of racial warfare.

18. He thought the time had come when the Government of the Union of South Africa should recognize its responsibilities, not only to its African population but to all mankind. Its *apartheid* policy was in keeping neither with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations Charter nor with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The fear on which it was based was completely groundless, and the prejudices associated with it would not be tolerated much longer by the victims of persecution. It was therefore the hope of his delegation that the Union Government would finally see reason and act in a manner befitting a Member State of the United Nations. His delegation would support any draft resolution which would assist in the attainment of that end.

19. Mr. LAPIAN (Indonesia) pointed out that the racial problems in the modern world were not biological, but cultural, in origin; they had been created by the expansion of European civilization. The myth of the superiority of the white man, and of Western civilization, had begun with the first contacts between Europeans and non-Europeans; and it was the survival of

that myth, refuted by history, which was in 1961 plaguing the Union of South Africa.

20. The contacts between Europeans and non-Europeans established in the time of the colonial empires had had varying consequences in different parts of the world. In Australia and in North America, the European settlers and their descendants had been able to acquire numerical superiority over the indigenous inhabitants. Elsewhere—as in South East Asia, in Africa south of the Sahara and in the Pacific Islands—the Europeans had managed to impose Western institutions only on the upper strata of indigenous societies, and the Western way of life had never been able to influence the mass of the population. In Asia and the Far East, the Europeans had not been numerous enough to stamp the Western seal on very ancient civilizations which like those of Africa, were now in process of revival. In Latin America, the mixing of races had made it possible to establish, without undue difficulty, a social organization which included peoples of different origins. But within the predominantly agricultural societies of the colonial empires the relations between races were governed by a caste system, with Europeans dominating. That kind of system had exacerbated racial antagonism. The rise of nationalism in Africa and in Asia and the development of more industrial and urban societies were inexorably sweeping the caste system away. In fact, in a modern industrial society the population became increasingly mobile and the result was a greater mixing of races and cultures. Those two factors could not fail, in the long run, to have far-reaching effects on the policy of the Government of the Union of South Africa.

21. However, while all other nations of the world were adjusting to contemporary realities and creating harmonious multiracial societies, the Union of South Africa was still perpetuating colonial practices. Its policy of racial segregation and discrimination was a violation of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Union Government, nevertheless had the audacity to present that policy in the guise of a sacred mission and claimed that it was making South Africa a firm bastion of the West and Christendom in Africa. It was difficult to believe that the West and Christianity would wish to be exemplified by the policies of the Union of South Africa.

22. The policy of *apartheid* and all the discriminatory legislation of the Union of South Africa were based solely on the white's fear of the non-white majority of the population. That majority had been deprived of all basic human rights. Being unable to work or live where they wished or attend a school of their choice, having no parliamentary representation, and having no authority to which to appeal for the redress of their grievances, the non-whites were completely isolated from South African life. Their function in society was a purely economic one: the provision of cheap labour for the country's industries.

23. Admittedly, there were still elements among the white minority in South Africa who were opposed to that policy. But those elements had little impact on the present Government of the Union. The violence which was brewing from the resentment of the non-whites threatened to engulf not only the proponents of *apartheid*, but all whites living in South Africa. It was to prevent that impending catastrophe that the Union Government must be made to see the futility of its policy.

By attempting to perpetuate an evil which the other countries of the world were endeavouring to eradicate, the Union Government was violating its obligations under the United Nations Charter and was creating a threat to international peace and security. It was for that reason that the Indonesian delegation had always believed that the United Nations was fully competent to discuss the question.

24. Year after year the General Assembly had appealed to the Union Government to reconsider its policy of *apartheid*. The Union Government had ignored those appeals and had even refused to attend the Committee's debates. It was therefore quite pointless to reiterate the earlier resolutions of the General Assembly. There was not the slightest indication that the Union Government would respond more favourably in 1961 than it had previously. Moreover the Secretary-General's discussions on *apartheid* with the Prime Minister of the Union had produced no noticeable effect on that country's racial policies.

25. The United Nations, which had refused to admit one of the world's greatest Powers because it had allegedly violated the principles of the Charter, had none the less permitted a Member State to betray those very principles. That was to apply a double set of standards. The time had come for the United Nations to use all the means at its disposal to obtain compliance with its resolutions and its principles. Strong action must be taken. That might be a matter for regret, but the patience of world public opinion was nearly exhausted and that of the non-white population of South Africa had already been too sorely tried. The Indonesian delegation therefore urged the Committee, in the interests of both South Africa and world peace and security, to take the necessary steps to resolve the question once and for all.

26. Mr. MASSOUD-ANSARI (Iran) recalled that it had always been from the standpoint of respect for human values and the application of the principles proclaimed in the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the General Assembly had examined the policy of *apartheid* and had condemned its moral, political, social, legal and philosophic aspects. After the Sharpeville incidents, it had become obvious that that policy had also to be considered as a threat to international peace and security. The question had therefore been brought before the Security Council. However, neither the Council's condemnation nor the appeal it had launched, nor the efforts of the Secretary-General, had achieved the desired results. Nor had the Union of South Africa heeded the advice of its friends

in the Commonwealth, from which it had decided to withdraw.

27. Like other delegations, however, the Iranian delegation thought that every possible effort must continue to be made to convince the Union Government of the absurdity of its policy. That Government must also be made to understand that the appeals and requests made to it were acts of international co-operation aimed at remedying an explosive situation which was a danger not only to peace and security but also to the stability and tranquility of the Union of South Africa itself.

28. The Union leaders persisted in alleging that the recommendations of the United Nations and other international bodies constituted interference in the domestic affairs of their country and therefore could not be taken into account. They even boasted of their policy and, to counter the criticisms levelled at them, alleged that their accusers did not have clean hands or a clear conscience. That argument did not, however, justify the discriminatory policy practised in the Union of South Africa. What was important was not the existence of gaps and imperfections in the legislation and practice of a particular country, but that country's willingness to undertake reforms with a view to achieving the purposes of the Charter.

29. Racial prejudice was an evil which was deep-rooted in certain countries and therefore could not be eliminated easily or quickly. Governments must be ready to start fighting the evil and must follow a path that would lead to its eradication. Unfortunately, that had not hitherto been the case of the Union Government. It was to be hoped, however, that that Government would change its attitude and agree to comply with the rules of international morality and the repeated appeals of the United Nations. Its own interests demanded, moreover, that it awake without delay to its international responsibilities and repudiate its disastrous policy, which was a vestige of the colonialist spirit. History taught that it was impossible to withstand the demands of the time and that any policy based on racial hatred was doomed to failure. In the case of *apartheid* in the Union of South Africa, such failure was all the more certain and all the closer in that the continent of Africa was today in full ferment. The new wind which was blowing through Africa and carrying its peoples towards emancipation might well become a tempest and destroy all hope of a peaceful solution if the Union Government did not take the necessary decisions in time.

The meeting rose at 12.5 p.m.