



Monday, 14 January 1957,  
at 3.15 p.m.

**New York**

**CONTENTS**

	Page
Agenda item 61:	
Question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of <i>apartheid</i> of the Government of the Union of South Africa ( <i>continued</i> )	51

*Chairman:* Mr. Selim SARPEN (Turkey).

**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/3190 and Add.1 and 2) (*continued*)**

1. Mr. TALAAT (Egypt) recalled that the item before the Special Political Committee had originally been submitted in the hope that the United Nations could exert its moral influence to bring about a solution. The South African Government's persistent refusal to recognize United Nations competence and to co-operate with the General Assembly and with the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa, appointed by resolution 616 A (VII), had frustrated all efforts to settle the problem satisfactorily. The Union Government had clearly demonstrated its intention of making racial discrimination the basis of its political system to the detriment of the majority of the South African population, and had accordingly implemented much discriminatory legislation, in particular the Bantu Education Act, No. 47, 1953 and the Group Areas Act, No. 41, 1950, in violation of its obligations under the Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. World public opinion strongly disapproved of the Union Government's actions, and the Bandung Conference of April, 1955, had condemned them as a violation of human rights and of human dignity.

2. The South African policy of *apartheid* was certainly a danger to the general welfare of the world and to friendly relations between States. The United Nations would be committing a grave error if it let itself be deterred from continuing its efforts to bring about a change in South African racial policies. The Egyptian delegation continued to hope that world opinion would compel the Union Government to reconsider its position, and that the continued efforts of the United Nations would one day bring equality to all the people of the Union of South Africa. It would support any proposal for a solution of the problem in accordance with the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

3. Mr. VOUTOV (Bulgaria) pointed out that the United Nations had the right to expect the Union of South Africa, as a Member State, to abide by its obligations under the Charter and to renounce its policy of *apartheid*. The United Nations could not

remain indifferent to the dangerous situation resulting from the implementation of that policy; the Union of South Africa must be compelled to reappraise it in the light of the Charter principles.

4. Race conflict in the Union of South Africa was not a matter exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of the Union Government. Despite United Nations efforts to persuade that Government to revise its discriminatory legislation, the inequalities between the white and non-white population were increasing, and tensions and hatred between the races were growing not only in the Union of South Africa but all over the African continent. There was an imminent danger that the race conflict would soon become acute, thus threatening world peace and security.

5. The root of the problem in the Union of South Africa could be found in the determination of the white ruling circles to remain the absolute masters of the non-white population, based on the old colonial concept that the only way to safeguard white Christian civilization was to keep the coloured races in subjection. However, history and science had proved the falsity of the race theories underlying *apartheid*.

6. *Apartheid* meant a status of virtual slavery for the majority of the South African population. It was being implemented by legislation preventing non-whites from owning land, exercising trade union rights, residing in city areas, and having equal opportunities for education, medical assistance and fair remuneration of their labour. Quoting figures to show how Africans were being discriminated against in education, the mining industry and health, Mr. Voutov said it was not difficult to realize that the ruling circles of the Union of South Africa were not only implementing the racial theories applied by the Nazis, but were trying to find moral justification for their policies. The South African Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Verwoerd, for example, had sought to justify *apartheid* on moral grounds, saying that "each nation had the right to self-defence", a right that could presumably be enjoyed only by Europeans. The representative of the Union of South Africa should not show hypocritical concern for the freedom of other peoples, but should co-operate in bringing about a speedy solution of the race problem in his country.

7. The Bulgarian delegation had been surprised that the General Assembly at its tenth session had decided (551st plenary meeting) not to renew the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa, which had kept the Assembly informed of developments in the Union of South Africa and had produced three extremely valuable reports (A/2505 and Add. 1, A/2719, A/2953) on the racist nature of South African legislation. The Assembly should re-establish the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa, with more specific terms of reference, because it was the only body that could objectively report to the

General Assembly on the progress being made towards a solution of the race conflict.

8. The time had come for the United Nations to do more than adopt resolutions calling upon South Africa to put an end to *apartheid*. It should consider more concrete action such as the sending of observers to study the situation on the spot. Bulgaria was prepared to support all proposals designed to put an end to the racial discrimination in South Africa.

9. Mr. KING (Liberia) read to the Committee extracts from the opening of the statement made on behalf of the French delegation at the current session by Mr. Houphouët-Boigny, an elected representative of the African people in the French National Assembly for the past ten years, and Chairman of the Rassemblement démocratique africain, to the 590th meeting of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. Men like Mr. Houphouët-Boigny were a manifestation of the advantages that enlightened European colonial rule had brought to Africa and at the same time a proof of the capacity of Africans for advancement and of the contribution which they could make to the building of a new world in which men of different races and degrees of civilization would work together in harmony.

10. The Liberian delegation could add little to the discussion of race conflict in the Union of South Africa save to reaffirm its previous position and its determination to vote in favour of any resolution urging Members of the United Nations to abstain from racial discrimination incompatible with their obligations under the Charter and appealing specifically to the Union Government to promote respect for human rights in its dealings with the non-European population of the Union of South Africa. He regretted that the Union Government was not participating in the discussion and that the Committee was thus deprived of its valuable contribution. He also regretted that the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa had been refused admission to Union territory.

11. The Union Government seemed determined to disregard the world-wide opposition aroused by its policy of *apartheid*. It rejected the findings of science that there was no inherent distinction between races, and refused to abide by the provisions of the Charter in regard to the promotion of respect for human rights, without distinction, for all. The intransigent views of the Union Government had been stated by many representatives of Church and State in the Union of South Africa, to the effect that the white race in the Union of South Africa could only be preserved by *apartheid* — in contrast with the humane and liberal policies adopted by other colonial Governments in Africa. In the face of the South African Government's refusal to abide by its pledge under Article 56 of the Charter, the United Nations was apparently helpless to bring relief to the millions in the Union of South Africa who had been deprived of their fundamental freedoms. Nevertheless, the United Nations had been able to rise to the challenge presented by recent events in Hungary and despite the Hungarian Government's invocation of Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter, the Assembly had denounced the acts of brutality committed in Hungary and had appointed a special committee to study the situation there.

12. In the absence of the South African delegation, Liberia had felt it its duty to refrain from condemning the Union Government, or indeed from going into

the substance of the matter. Nevertheless, it believed strongly in the dynamic principles of the Charter. The architects of the Charter had had a high sense of moral rectitude, of the dignity of the human being and of the rights of the individual. They had sought to lay a foundation on which to rectify the injustices and abuses of the old order, and had envisaged the creation of one world in which mankind would rise to its full stature in a universal brotherhood. Those Member States which had voted in favour of the resolution of Hungary had done so because they believed it to be right to uphold the principles of human dignity set forth in the Charter. He felt that the Assembly's action on the important question of *apartheid* in South Africa should be based on the same principles as those which had actuated the decisions on the crises in Hungary and in the Middle East.

13. Mr. ABDOH (Iran) said that at previous sessions of the General Assembly, the Committee had been in a better position to discuss the question of racial conflict in the Union of South Africa because it had had before it the reports of the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa. However, despite its objective analyses of legislation and of events and opinions in the Union of South Africa in connexion with the policy of *apartheid*, the Commission had been discontinued. Had it not been for the account of recent developments in the Union of South Africa given by the representatives of India and Iraq the Committee's position would have been very difficult.

14. The delegation of Iran concluded from those accounts that despite the resolution 917 (X) adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth session, the Government of the Union of South Africa was continuing to implement its racist policies in such a way that the situation was deteriorating daily. The discriminatory legislation most recently adopted was in clear violation of the Union of South Africa's obligation under the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and could serve only to intensify hatred and to increase anti-white feeling among the non-European majority of the South African population. The continuation of that policy was a disturbing factor in international relations, and a potential cause of international conflict. He hoped that the Union Government would reflect on the consequences of its policy and would realize the force of world public opinion as expressed in the resolutions adopted by an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly.

15. The Government of the Union of South Africa was the only Government which had adopted racial segregation as a goal, inspired by a mistaken racist philosophy. The policy of integration had already borne fruit elsewhere and former clashes had given place to harmonious relations. Non-Europeans in the Union of South Africa must have followed developments abroad with great interest. It was hard to see how the Union of South Africa could afford to remain the only country in the world persisting in a policy of planned racial discrimination. The Union of South Africa obviously faced many genuinely difficult problems which could not be remedied overnight. Unfortunately, if it persisted in its racist policy, both sides would inevitably suffer. He hoped that the Union Government would ultimately yield to reason, reconsider its disastrous policy and adopt an attitude more in conformity with the universally accepted principles of morality and of the United Nations Charter.

16. In the meantime, the General Assembly must continue to condemn the discrimination exercised by one of its Members against the non-European majority of its population. The least that it could do was to reaffirm that the maintenance of such a policy was contrary to the principles of the Charter and of international co-operation. It must invite the Union Government to revise its position on the matter in the light of its undertakings under the Charter and of the progress that had been accomplished in other multi-racial societies. It would also seem advisable that the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa should be reconstituted.

17. Although such action on the part of the General Assembly might not immediately convince the Union Government that it must revise its policy, the firmness of world opinion as expressed in the resolutions of the General Assembly could not remain without effect forever, even upon the European population of the Union of South Africa. Sooner or later most of them would realize that the continuation of *apartheid* might prove fatal to their own future and would adopt a sane solution to the tragic problem. The delegation of Iran was willing to support, or even to co-sponsor, any draft resolution that would help to achieve such a solution.

18. Mr. NISOT (Belgium) said that his Government was firmly opposed to racial discrimination of any kind. However, the real issue in the case in point was whether the General Assembly was in fact competent to discuss the matter. The item had been brought up in the Assembly on five separate occasions, and in each case it had been shown that the matter was essentially one of democratic jurisdiction and was therefore governed by Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter. The General Assembly was in error to persist in trying to deal with the matter. Since it was exceeding its powers, its recommendations were naturally null and void and it was not surprising that the Union of South Africa should not comply with them or even participate in the debates. For the United Nations to persist in such illegal activities could only add to its list of failures and shake world belief in its usefulness and effectiveness. The Belgian delegation would vote against any resolution submitted in connexion with problems which clearly fell outside the competence of the Organization.

19. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) said that time would not allow him to comment on the great mass of discriminatory legislation put into force by the Government of the Union of South Africa. In spite of repeated protestations solemnly made from the rostrum of the United Nations, the position of the Government of the Union of South Africa remained one of contempt and defiance of world public opinion and of the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations Charter.

20. Since the Second World War, certain colonial Powers had presented African liberation movements to the world as movements inspired by Communist infiltration. The Government of the Union of South Africa had lost no time in exploiting that approach for its own purposes. The Suppression of Communism Act No. 44, 1950, had been adopted for the purpose of suppressing at home any movement which aimed at securing freedom, equality and justice for non-Europeans in the Union of South Africa, and of discrediting such movements abroad as inspired by foreign countries. The Union Government had thereby sought to alienate from the African movements the sympathy

and support of anti-colonial organizations in the Western world which believed in upholding right against wrong and freedom against oppression. The Union Government could deceive no one by such manoeuvres. Actually if anything encouraged communism in the Union of South Africa, it was the policies and actions of that Government. Moreover, national liberation movements and even revolutions had occurred in Africa long before the Soviet Union had emerged as a world Power.

21. By means of the Separate Representation of Voters Act No. 46, 1951, the Union Government, which pretended to be a democracy based upon a parliamentary system, had in effect denied voting rights to non-Europeans and restricted them to citizens of European origin. Thus, it had even rejected policies favoured by colonial Powers in their own interests, such as the French policy of political partnership and cultural assimilation, and the British policy of gradual evolution to self-rule and eventual political independence. Even the Belgian system, designed to train Africans to be skilled labourers in order to keep the machine of exploitation running, was too much for the ruling class of the Union of South Africa.

22. By mistreating its non-European population, the Union Government had ruthlessly trampled underfoot every shred of human rights and dignity, and had erected a code of law and morality worse than any ever attempted by the fascist States in the days of their triumph. That policy was even being represented as the will of God by the Dutch Reformed Church, which asserted that there could be no equality between black and white in State and Church. The European minority in the Union of South Africa had exaggerated its fears beyond all comprehension. The Africans wished only to live in peace, amity and complete equality with the European minority which had settled in their midst. They had no intention, either now or in the future, to oust the Europeans from the continent of Africa, but wished to co-operate with the European population in order to build a welfare state in which all men and women could live and develop in peace and prosperity.

23. That objective was not beyond attainment if the present rulers of the Union adopted a realistic policy and abandoned their present course. However, peaceful and prosperous co-operation of all elements of the Union of South Africa's population could not be achieved without immediate abolition of all racial and other discriminatory laws; freedom of speech, association and assembly for all; the right of every adult to elect and be elected to the Parliament of the Union; equal pay for equal work by men and women and abolition of the system of forced labour; acceptance, without reservation, of common citizenship for all; abolition of land laws which allowed Europeans to alienate land from the Africans; and finally the right of all to develop their resources under a planned system adopted with the consent of all. Under such conditions, the presence of the European minority, with its cultural background and technological advancement, would be an important asset.

24. He appealed to the European minority in the Union of South Africa to open a new chapter in its relations with the African population, for no other course could lead to the settlement of the problem. In the past, powerful empires had failed to heed similar appeals, and historians had found that on the whole the causes of their decline and fall had been not

dissimilar to those which could be observed in the Union of South Africa today. In conclusion, he paid a tribute to the courageous men and women of European origin in the Union of South Africa who, under very difficult circumstances, had never ceased to champion the cause of the oppressed in their midst.

25. Mr. Kamaruddin AHMED (Pakistan) reviewed the history in the United Nations of the item under consideration. In spite of the Articles of the Charter which proclaimed universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in spite of the repeated recommendations of the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa and of the General Assembly itself, the Union Government had continued to apply racial measures, invoking the argument of domestic jurisdiction. Quite apart from the question of competence, the Government of the Union of South Africa should not ignore the views of an Organization of eighty nations.

26. The tendency today was to think in terms of human equality, to promote the freedom of the individual, the group and the race, and to act internationally to promote justice and peace. If the United Nations did not stand for the dignity of man, and for peace and progress in the world, it would be nothing more than a sounding board for rival ideologies and a battleground for national rivalries. He hoped he would not be misunderstood by his friends in the West if he appealed to them to readjust their ideas and recognize the passion for equality which dominated the thinking and action of the peoples of Asia and Africa. If due respect was not shown to those peoples, economic, social or political assistance would fail to win them.

27. He would not comment at length on the restrictions imposed on the non-white population of the Union of South Africa. It was enough to study a summary of their legal disabilities published on 4 January 1957 in *U.S. News & World Report*.

28. The Colombo Powers, at their meetings in 1954 at Colombo and Bogor, had expressed their very great concern over the situation, and his Government fully endorsed the opinions expressed and the conclusions reached at the Bandung Conference in April 1955. That Conference had deplored the policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination and had reaffirmed the determination of the African-Asian peoples to eradicate every trace of racialism anywhere.

29. His delegation was convinced that human rights were the concern of the whole human race, and that the solution of the Union of South Africa's racial problem lay not in the domination of one race by another but in a partnership of races on the basis of equality and freedom. His delegation would support any resolution likely to contribute to the mitigation

of the sufferings of the non-whites of the Union of South Africa and hoped that the rulers of the Union of South Africa would change their attitude.

30. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that the Union of South Africa had repeatedly violated its obligations as a Member of the United Nations by ignoring the appeals of the General Assembly to put an end to racial persecution and by continuing a racist policy that was contrary to the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations Charter. The contention of the Government of the Union of South Africa that that policy was a purely domestic matter had been rejected again and again by the General Assembly, which had emphasized its international character by retaining it on the agenda over a number of years.

31. Recent events showed that racial persecution in the Union of South Africa, far from decreasing, was gaining in intensity. Many tens of thousands of Africans and persons of Indian origin were being removed from their homes, and deprived of their property and employment. The *Washington Post-Times-Herald* of 15 November 1956 had reported that the first 57,000 Africans had been forcibly resettled in a new, wholly undeveloped area.

32. That the Government of the Union of South Africa intended to press forward with its official programme of racial segregation in the political, economic and social life of the country was clear from the words of the Minister of Native Affairs, who had declared that *apartheid* was the only hope for the Union of South Africa, and that mingling of the races was impossible if the white man wished to continue to exist in the country, since such mingling would only create chaos, and would eventually lead to black control of the Union of South Africa.

33. The Union of South Africa's racial laws, which violated human rights and fundamental freedoms and debased the dignity of man, were reviving the worst features of colonialism at a time when colonialism was becoming a thing of the past and the world was witnessing the liberation and renaissance of the peoples of Asia and Africa.

34. The position of the Soviet delegation on the item under consideration was based, now, as at past sessions, on the principled and consistent policy of the Soviet Government, which had secured to all nationalities of the Soviet Union full equality of rights, without distinction as to race, language or religion. For that reason, his delegation would support any action by the United Nations to put an end to racial discrimination and persecution in the Union of South Africa, and to restore the economic, political and social rights of the indigenous population of that country.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.