

Chinese Representation

For the first time since 1950, when a resolution aimed at replacing the Nationalist Chinese Delegation by representatives of the Peking government was defeated, the question of the representation of China in the United Nations was accorded a full-scale debate during the sixteenth session of the General Assembly. At each session between 1959 and 1961, procedural moves—which became known as the moratorium—prevented both substantive consideration of the question and any change in Chinese representation.

At the sixteenth session, two agenda items were requested, one by New Zealand entitled: "Question of the representation of China in the United Nations", and one by the Soviet Union entitled: "Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations". Both items were considered concurrently by the General Committee and both were accepted for inscription on the Assembly's agenda after a short debate, the New Zealand item by a margin of 15 votes in favour to none against, with 5 abstentions (Belgium, China, Czechoslovakia, Costa Rica, U.S.S.R.); the Soviet item by 7 in favour (Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ghana, Liberia, Niger, U.S.S.R.), 3 against (China, Philippines, Costa Rica), with 10 abstentions. These decisions were subsequently accepted by the Assembly without a formal vote. Canada was not a member of the General Committee.

When the substantive debate commenced, two draft resolutions were before the Assembly, one submitted by the Soviet Union which called for the immediate removal of "representatives of the Chiang Kai-shek clique" and their replacement in the United Nations and all its organs by representatives of the government of the People's Republic of China; the other, by Australia, Colombia, Italy, Japan and the United States requesting a decision that any proposal to change the representation of China would be regarded as an "important" question under the United Nations Charter, requiring a two-thirds majority vote. Towards the end of the debate, Cambodia, Ceylon and Indonesia introduced an amendment to the Soviet resolution designed to eliminate most of its offensive terminology and to substitute a simple request for a decision to seat Communist Chinese representatives in the United Nations and all its organs.

In subsequent voting, the five-power draft resolution was approved by a substantial majority of 61 (including Canada) to 34 against with 7 abstentions. The Soviet resolution was defeated by a vote of 37 in favour to 48 against (Canada), with 19 abstentions. The amendment to the Soviet resolution was voted on in two parts but suffered the same fate, the votes being 23 in favour to 40 against (Canada), with 39 abstentions and 30 in favour to 45 against (Canada), with 29 abstentions.

During the general debate, the Canadian Delegation's statement was explicit in rejecting the Soviet resolution because it prejudged the issue under consideration, was inequitable and was contrary to the interests of