

The debate this year differed from previous debates in that the Union of South Africa demonstrated a more flexible attitude in discussing conditions in the territory. The hardening of its position during the debate led those members of the Committee traditionally opposed to the colonial powers to contemplate taking harsher and more extreme measures against the Union and, particularly, in respect of its policies on apartheid. For the first time, the United States voted with the majority on the two main resolutions. The United Kingdom, however, continued to support South Africa.

The Somali-Ethiopian Frontier Question

This year the problem of the undefined frontier between Ethiopia and Somalia was again left unresolved despite lengthy negotiations between the two parties and the urgent character which the question acquired because of the advancement of the date of Somalia's independence to July 1, 1960.

The problem, which has its origins in the period of Italian and Ethiopian expansion into the Somali lowlands at the turn of the century, involves various international agreements, the most important being the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1891, the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 and the Italo-Ethiopian Convention of 1908. The last provided for a delimitation of the frontier which, however, did not proceed very far because of disagreement over the interpretation to be given to the points of reference and tribal territorial limits mentioned in the Convention. From 1935 to 1950 the problem of the frontier did not arise as Italy, and later Britain, occupied contiguous Ethiopian provinces. At the time of their withdrawal in 1950 the British established a "provisional administrative line", the northern section of which was placed farther east than the limits of the pre-1935 Italian occupation. Over the years the question has been further complicated by border incidents and hardships resulting from the division of Somali nomadic groups.

The Trusteeship Agreement of 1950 provided only that "the boundaries of the Trust Territory shall be fixed by international agreement, and, insofar as they are not already delimited, shall be delimited in accordance with a procedure approved by the General Assembly". The latter recommended that same year that Ethiopia and Italy engage in direct negotiation and should this fail, proceed to mediation and finally to arbitration, should mediation prove unsuccessful.

Little progress was reported from 1950 to 1957 and, in the latter year, the General Assembly recommended the establishment of an arbitration tribunal to delimit the frontier in accordance with terms of reference to be agreed upon between the two governments with the assistance of an independent person appointed by them. The tribunal was established but, as the two governments were unable to agree on the "independent person", the General Assembly recommended in 1958 that the two governments invite the King of Norway to nominate such independent person in the event of a continued failure to reach such an agreement. Mr. Trygve Lie was subsequently appointed by the King of Norway and negotiations between the two parties took place with Mr. Lie's assistance in Paris, Oslo and New York during the summer and autumn of 1959.

Both parties reported to the General Assembly at its fourteenth session that they had failed to agree on the terms of reference of the arbitration tribunal, despite their acceptance, as a basis for discussions, of a draft compromise prepared by Mr. Lie. The Ethiopians held that the question of the exclusive validity of the 1908 Convention, the irrelevance of third-party treaties and the exclusion of all recommendations outside the 1908 convention